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ABSTRACT

Plain Talk is a community-based initiative designed to assist neighborhood groups and residents in creating and implementing locally acceptable and effective strategies to protect sexually active youth from pregnancy. Plain Talk aims to affect individual, neighborhood, and community behavior through a process that focuses on helping adults develop the skills and tools they need to communicate with young people to reduce adolescent sexual risk taking. This starter kit describes the strategies used in the five Plain Talk sites and attempts to capture the lessons these communities learned while carrying out the program. The kit is organized into six sections: (1) a description of the structure of the program; (2) community mapping; (3) establishing a resident network; (4) developing resident involvement and leadership; (5) education and skills building; and (6) reinforcing key messages. Each section has one or more chapters that provide details about the activity. They offer a description of the activity, suggested steps for carrying it out, trouble-shooting ideas, and resources. Key lessons derived from the Plain Talk program center on the importance of involving community residents and letting them drive the program. (SLD)

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PlainTalk

A Practical Guide to Community-Based Programming to Reduce Teen Pregnancy, STDs and HIV/AIDS

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PlainTalk

Starter Kit

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO COMMUNITY BASED PROGRAMMING
TO REDUCE TEEN PREGNANCY, STDs AND HIV AIDS

Acknowledgments

The people who live and/or work in the Plain Talk communities opened their doors and filing cabinets and provided all the information for this publication. They shared their experience, ideas and resources hoping that other communities might benefit from what they learned and all they achieved.

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Other publications about the Plain Talk Initiative:

Plain Talk: The Story of a Community-Based Strategy to Reduce Teen Pregnancy is the story of Plain Talk from the viewpoint of the community members involved. It shares stories behind the achievements and conveys the vitality of each of the five Plain Talk sites.

The Plain Talk Planning Year: Mobilizing Communities to Change is the first in a series of evaluations of the planning and implementation of Plain Talk.

When Teens Have Sex: Issues and Trends, a special Kids Count Report

Forthcoming publication:
The Plain Talk Implementation Phase: A Final Report, Public/Private Ventures

Copies are available free of charge from the Foundation.

PHOTO/LAURIE DOUGLAS 1997

Plain Talk Atlanta youth learn job skills, respect and more at the Summer Youth Institute.

PlainTalk
Starter Kit

A Practical Guide to Community-Based Programming to Reduce Teen Pregnancy, STDs and HIV/AIDS

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PlainTalk

Introduction

What is Plain Talk?

Plain Talk is a community-based initiative designed to assist neighborhood groups and residents in creating and implementing locally acceptable and effective strategies to protect sexually active youth from pregnancy. Launched in 1993, Plain Talk began as a four-year program funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Unlike teen pregnancy prevention programs that focus on "educating" youth, Plain Talk aims to impact individual, neighborhood and community behavior. It is a *process* that focuses on helping adults develop the skills and tools they need to communicate effectively with the young people of their community to reduce adolescent sexual risk-taking.

There are five Plain Talk sites: Mechanicsville in Atlanta, Georgia; Logan Heights in San Diego, California; Stowe Village in Hartford, Connecticut; St. Thomas in New Orleans, Louisiana; and White Center in Seattle, Washington. The sites began their efforts by agreeing to four basic principles:

- Community residents are the primary stakeholders in changing community behavior and must play a critical role in the decision-making process.
- Residents must come to a clear consensus about what changes are necessary.
- Communities must have access to, or the means to obtain, reliable information about the problems and practices they are trying to address.
- Adults should not deny the reality that some youth are sexually active.

The residents of each Plain Talk community explored attitudes and behaviors related to youth taking sexual risks, and they developed holistic strategies suitable to the community's culture and circumstances. Plain Talk teams worked to create consensus among a broad base of community adults regarding the urgency of changing teen sexual behavior and the steps to address it. With the resources and support Plain Talk provided, community residents reached out to each other, their children, local service providers and the larger urban communities of which they are a part to change the messages and the reproductive health services young people receive.

At its core, Plain Talk is a communication strategy that begins a cycle of change to address the long-term problem of teen sexual risk taking. The strategy involves:

- Persuasive messages
- Skills building for adults and youth, including the use of both adult and teen peer educators
- Partnerships between residents and service providers to promote and reinforce clear, consistent messages to youth about sexual risk reduction

During the four years of Casey support, Plain Talk successfully:

- Increased neighborhood awareness about the risks of teen pregnancy and HIV/AIDS/STDs
- Improved adult/adolescent communication about responsible decision-making
- Increased access to adolescent reproductive health services
- Expanded neighborhood organizations' capacity to conduct outreach and provide peer adult education
- Developed resident leadership and advocacy skills

The first phase of Plain Talk is now over. However, all of the communities have found resources to maintain at least some of their activities, and the effort continues. In this new phase, Plain Talk sites are looking beyond community borders. The first generation of Plain Talk participants are now offering to share their experience with other agencies and neighborhoods who are considering or are already implementing community-based programs. Hence, this publication.

ABOUT THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private, charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. Its primary mission is to foster public policies, human service reforms and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. In pursuing this goal, the Foundation provides grants that help states, cities and neighborhoods create more innovative and cost-effective responses to these needs.

The challenge of helping rebuild distressed communities is at the center of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's grantmaking plans for the next decade. Working with neighborhoods and state and local governments, the Foundation provides support for long-term efforts to strengthen the social networks, physical infrastructure, employment, support services, self-determination and economic vitality of these communities.

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WHAT MAKES PLAIN TALK DIFFERENT?

- Plain Talk is a *process*.
- It does not begin with a preconceived plan. It is *community directed*.
- It focuses on *engaging adults* in protecting youth from sexual risks.
- It encourages adults to *acknowledge that some teens are sexually active*.
- Plain Talk *improves communication* between parents and youth, between family members, and between different members of the community.
- It strives to *change cultural norms and values* that contribute to the issue.
- It *provides opportunities* – such as employment, leadership skills, advocacy capacity – to residents.

Using This Publication

The Plain Talk Starter Kit describes the strategies used in the five Plain Talk sites and attempts to capture the lessons these communities learned while carrying out the program. The kit is intended to be a tool that shares these strategies and lessons with other communities. Each Plain Talk site has people available to offer hands-on technical assistance or training to interested agencies and communities using this and other resources.

The Starter Kit is also available as reference material independent of Plain Talk-led assistance. Whichever way you use this tool, please feel free to adapt the general model as well as the specific resources for use in your own programs. Plain Talk does not offer a "cookie-cutter" approach. In fact, individual sites do not believe that such a thing can be effective. Design your program and its components by taking into account the realities of your community.

How It's Organized

The Starter Kit is organized into six sections – the first section describes the structure of the program, and the remaining ones reflect the five key components of the initiative:

- Community Mapping
- Resident Network
- Developing Resident Involvement and Leadership
- Education and Skills Building
- Reinforcing Key Messages

Each section has one or more **chapters** that provide detail of the activity. The chapters offer a **description** of the activity, suggested **steps** for carrying it out, **trouble-shooting** ideas to help you steer away from possible obstacles, and **resources** – actual tools used to implement activities.

Overview of the Components

1. **Community Mapping**
   Plain Talk community members surveyed their neighbors (both youth and adults) to gather critical data about their community's beliefs, norms and practices. They called their strategy "Community Mapping," a highly collaborative process that also became a first step in forging community awareness and motivation around the issue of adolescent sexual risk-taking.

2. **Resident Network**
   Plain Talk sites developed a network of resident opinion leaders and spokespeople who guided the direction of the program and served as the primary means for disseminating information, recruiting resident participation and receiving feedback about Plain Talk neighborhood activities.

3. **Developing Resident Involvement and Leadership**
   Developing leadership skills among participating community members was a fundamental strategy to sustain Plain Talk in each community. This strategy empowered residents to tackle related issues and play a more integral role in the general well-being of their communities.

4. **Education and Skills-Building**
   The cornerstone of Plain Talk's educational strategy was getting the community – both youth and adults – working together to address the issue of adolescents' risky sexual behavior. Plain Talk believed that the community itself had the best chance of affecting real change in its individual members. So the program used community mapping data and other relevant resources and developed ways to facilitate community involvement. Key to this was educating adults and youth about reproductive health topics and helping people build the skills they need to communicate effectively and work together to protect the health of young people. Plain Talk organized a broad range of outreach activities to keep neighborhoods involved and informed. Peer educators became the primary means of delivering messages and promoting the program's education activities to adults and youth in the community.

5. **Reinforcing Key Messages**
   Messages were crucial to the Plain Talk program. The sites developed specific and relevant messages that were used throughout the program. They also developed educational tools and products to disseminate key messages and support activities.

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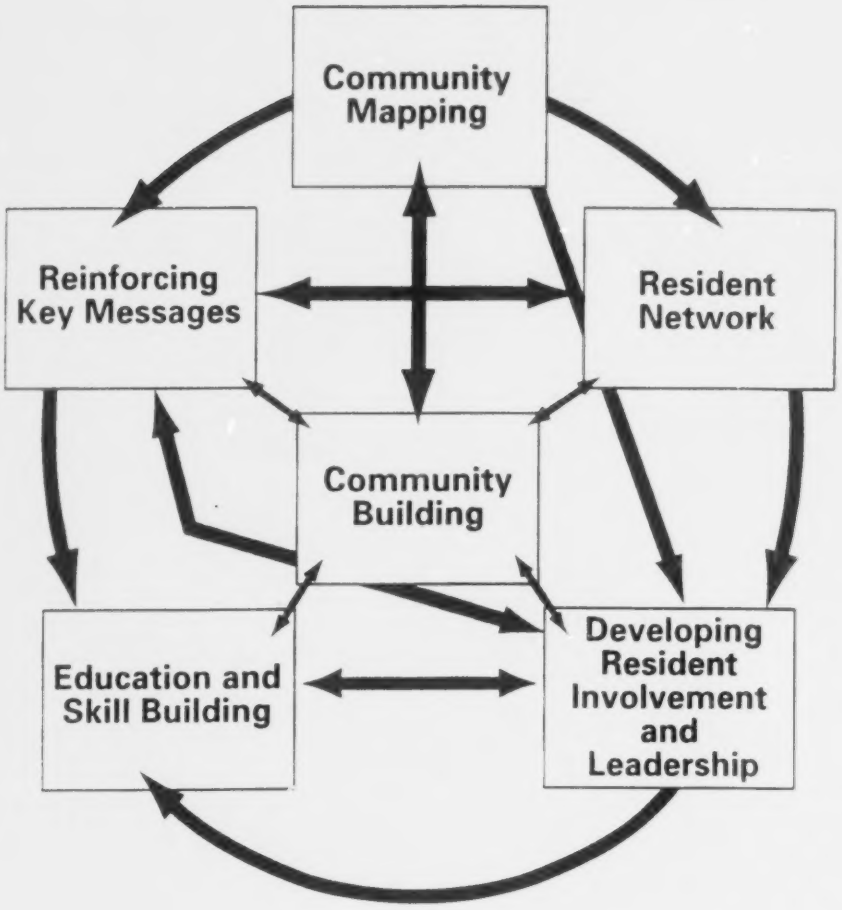
The structure of Plain Talk varied across the sites, but the core program components were identical. If the relationship of the components could be made visual, it might look like the flow chart below.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF KEY COMPONENTS



Section 1

Setting Up an Effective Program

PHOTO:ELIZABETH RAPPAPORT©1998

Setting Up an Effective Program

KEY POINTS

Set a realistic time-line. Plan to be in the community focusing on your goals for five years or more.

Locate your office in the community. Let the community get to know you by placing your office as close to the "hub" or center of activity as possible, and make your office a warm and welcoming place.

Staff your program with people from the community. At a minimum, try to find people with similar cultural backgrounds and with similar experiences.

Ally your program with one existing, credible agency that serves your community; this agency can "host" the program as the lead agency.

Plan and design your evaluation strategy at the outset of the program.

How Long Should the Program Run?

The key to success in effective programming is longevity. Stay in the community for as long as possible. One-year projects are unlikely to facilitate long-lasting change; two-year projects may be just getting started when they begin wrapping up.

Plain Talk was designed as a four-year program. The first year was devoted to learning more about the community through mapping and creating an implementation plan. The sites found that they needed at least that length of time to do this work well. The following three years focused on implementation – with attention to sustainability in the last year. Plain Talk sites recommend that projects start off with a five-year commitment, one more than the original design.

Once community members know you are going to stay, you have a better chance of winning their respect and active involvement. Be prepared to work with residents, organization partners and funders to develop realistic timelines and objectives.

How Was Plain Talk Structured?

The Plain Talk structure, founded on the principles of collaboration and community empowerment, contributed much to its success. The players in that structure include:

- Lead agency
- Staff (including outreach workers)
- Community coalition*
- Other volunteers*
- Service provider coalitions (in some cases)*
- Supporting individuals and agencies*

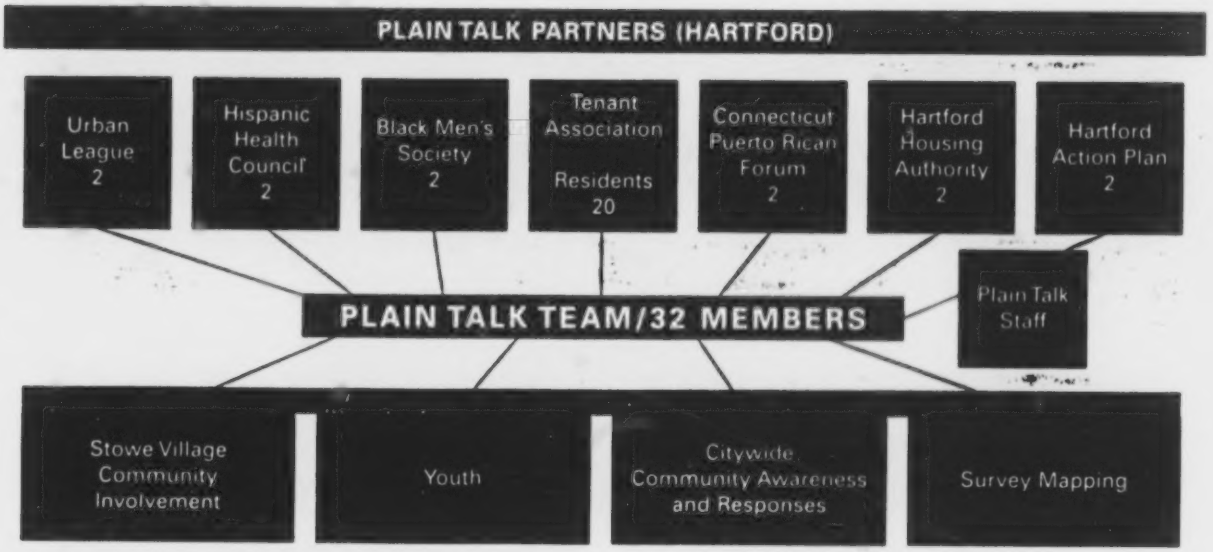
** See later sections of this publication for more information on these bodies.*

Plain Talk Hartford works with many local agencies and organizations to develop youth programs and activities that are unique to the community.

STRUCTURE IN HARTFORD

Plain Talk Hartford was led by the Plain Talk Team – a group of Stowe Village youth and adults that functions like a board of directors. These volunteers worked with Plain Talk staff and in partnership with the Hartford Action Plan on Infant Health, the lead agency for the initiative. Early on, the board decided it was important to get input from and provide ideas to other agencies working in the community. It set up an advisory council with representatives from the Urban League, the Black Men's Society, Hartford Housing Authority, Latinos Contra SIDA, and other religious, medical and community groups. Work groups of the Plain Talk Team focused on community involvement and youth activities and coordinated with other city-wide efforts. A work group also took responsibility for the community mapping. *See chart below.*

In response to shifting program opportunities, or as communities revisited original goals, partnerships expanded or diminished to reflect emerging priorities.



1. Lead Agency

Each of the five Plain Talk sites is managed and supported by a lead agency. Lead agencies were selected because they worked directly in the communities and were experienced in and supportive of community-based programming. Perhaps more importantly, they were established and reputable in the project areas. They each demonstrated the capacity and the willingness to tackle difficult issues related to the launch of a community mobilization and public education effort that addressed the needs of sexually active youth.

Initially, lead agencies assumed primary responsibility for developing resident leadership skills. They convened community service providers and residents in planning groups. Once local planning groups were established, these groups were, in large part, shaped and sustained by residents.

Working in partnership with community residents, lead agencies disseminated Plain Talk information beyond the neighborhood so that it reached policy makers and those providing services in the broader urban communities.

An important role for lead agencies was reaching out to and gaining commitment from potential partners outside the community. Lead agencies also helped with project fundraising and financial administration. These activities helped reduce some of the workload of the staff.

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2. Staff

The staffing structure varies from site to site, with four to six key staff in each Plain Talk community. All sites searched for staff whose language and cultural backgrounds were appropriate to the communities. The main staff positions are:

- Project Coordinator (1)
- Project Assistant (1)
- Community Organizer or Outreach Worker (1 or 2)
- Administrative Assistant (1)

The staff (joined, in several cases, by outreach workers and members of the resident board) work closely as a team. Early in the project, staff realized that to accomplish their objectives, they had to learn to work well together. The sites found that communication was key, and that regular (e.g., weekly) staff meetings helped to keep communication flowing. Staff meetings allowed time for everyone to talk about the key activities and issues they were working on, and saw this as a way to learn from and support each other. Several sites found that annual staff retreats offered an opportunity for team-building, continuing education and mutual sharing and support.

The roles, skills and experience required for each of the four core staff positions are detailed below:

Project Coordinator

Roles: Manage local efforts and act as liaison with the lead agency, donors, service providers and policy makers. Focus on outside connections, while staying grounded in community realities and project activities.

Skills/Attributes:

- Passion and commitment
- Management experience: staff supervision, financial planning, program management, etc.
- Marketing/fundraising
- Existing connection with the broader community and other agencies (e.g., donors, lead agency, boards)
- Interpersonal skills
- Knowledgeable in youth and family issues
- Public health or social work background
- Credibility in the community, or the ability to build relationships with community members
- Knowledgeable about community organizing
- Experienced with leadership development techniques

Project Assistant

Roles: Provide program support to Project Coordinator and technical support for specific project activities. Focus on community realities and project activities, while keeping aware of outside issues and responsibilities (e.g., donor requirements).

Skills/Attributes:

- Task-oriented
- Coordination/implementation
- Staff and volunteer supervision
- Strong writing and communication skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Able to analyze and assess situations
- Administrative skills
- Able to accept direction from multiple resources, e.g. residents, partners, lead agency

SUBSTITUTING A TRAINER FOR PROJECT ASSISTANT

Seattle decided to hire a trainer instead of a project assistant. This position served as a link between the community and the program. By establishing this position, the program made training a priority. The role of the trainer was to impart skills to others so that Plain Talk for Parents could continue after Plain Talk is gone.

A trainer should be able to:

- Identify skill development needs in others
- Develop training programs and materials
- Make effective oral presentations
- Facilitate groups
- Integrate topics such as family dynamics, sexuality and interpersonal communication into the training
- Talk comfortably about sex
- Normalize discussions about sex
- Tailor training materials to the specific needs of a particular group
- Learn about the community (if they are not from the community)
- Get along with a wide variety of people
- Communicate effectively

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Community Organizer/Outreach Worker

Roles: Coordinate door-to-door outreach, peer education activities and community-wide events.

Skills/Attributes:

- Knowledge of the community
- Credible with community members
- Community organizing skills – able to mobilize residents for community and educational events
- Articulate, outspoken – can recruit volunteers, not afraid to speak out
- Strong interpersonal skills
- Basic administrative skills

Administrative Assistant

Roles: Provide clerical support, data processing and other administrative tasks.

Skills/Attributes:

- Well informed and resourceful (able to do whatever it takes or find the necessary resources to complete assigned tasks)
- Oral and written communication skills
- Task- and detail-oriented
- Knowledge of administrative systems (e.g., requisitions and invoices)
- Computer skills or the ability to learn these skills

3. Community Resident Boards

Community Resident Boards made up of community members (adults, teens, men, women, elders and parents) drive the Plain Talk initiative. Structured differently in each site (and even called by different names), resident boards play the key role of keeping the program focused on community priorities.

The chapter called *Stakeholders*, in Section 3 of this publication, gives information about how to set up and run resident boards in order to make the most of this strategy.

4. Other Volunteers

In addition to the community members who participated as resident board members, Plain Talk successfully involved other people in their activities. More on how the initiative integrated other volunteers is in the chapter called *Surplus Benefits*, in Section 4 of this publication.

5. Service Provider Coalitions

Existing agencies actively serving the five communities were integrated into Plain Talk activities. Agency staff sat on coalitions, served as advisors, or were kept informed on a regular basis. Plain Talk benefited from this approach in that it had access to expertise available in the community; agencies benefited by receiving regular and better feedback from the community; and the community benefited from the improved services these agencies and Plain Talk were able to offer. This collaboration also helped to ensure that consistent messages were distributed.

Reaching Out, in Section 3, talks more about how partnerships were created and are sustained.

6. Supporting Individuals and Agencies (including technical consultants)

Plain Talk sites found that using outside resources, such as consultants and trainers with expertise in specific areas, enhanced their work. These people also brought an objectivity to the project that can be difficult for staff to maintain. Community leaders and collaborating agency key staff contributed to the project in a variety of ways – by writing letters of support, including Plain Talk in city-wide discussions about teen pregnancy prevention efforts, and by keeping the project well informed about related activities.

PHOTO/ELAINE DOUGLAS©1997

Summer is fun and educational at Atlanta's Summer Youth Institute.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Evaluation was integrated into the design – and original budget – of Plain Talk. Public/Private Ventures (P/PV), a not-for-profit corporation based in Philadelphia, was contracted from the beginning as the independent evaluator. Throughout the four years of initial implementation, P/PV conducted surveys and focus groups, made site visits and monthly phone calls, and collected census and other data. P/PV also employed ethnographers in several sites to collect qualitative data about the neighborhoods and Plain Talk activities. They looked at the initiative from three levels – community, organizational and individual.

In addition to cross-site evaluations, Plain Talk communities developed local strategies – their strategies – to monitor project development. Plain Talk sites recommend this type of integrated evaluation approach. They suggest that programs set up a monitoring and evaluation system to keep track and measure the progress of the program and its components – **at the start of the program.** If possible, contract an outside evaluator to conduct the evaluation independently or to help you design and implement an effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) strategy. Using an outside evaluator ensures objectivity.

A technical M&E specialist will provide you with needed expertise and relieve staff of certain tasks so that they can focus on other program activities. Such help could include designing M&E tools, establishing guidelines for using the tools, collecting the information, analyzing and reporting back on the findings, or training you to analyze the results.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EVALUATIONS OF SEXUALITY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

- Doing no evaluation is better than doing a bad evaluation.
- Rigorous outcome evaluations are appropriate only after a program is successfully implemented for a period of years.
- Evaluations must be consistent with the expressed goals of the program and the course content.
- Evaluations of comprehensive sexuality education should go beyond measuring changes in whether young people are having intercourse or whether they are using a contraceptive method.
- Evaluations of *school-based sexuality education* should focus on changes in knowledge, attitudes and skills. Be cautious about measuring outcomes outside the classroom.
- Simple programs should be evaluated by simple measures. Complex outcome measures on behavior change should be reserved for multi-year, intensive strategies.
- There is a need for new instruments to measure sexual health objectives.
- Qualitative methods are an important supplement to quantitative methods.

Excerpt from: *But Does It Work? Improving Evaluation of Sexuality Education*. Published by Siecus, 1998.

Steps

1. **Choose an evaluator.**
   Do some research. Ask your lead agency, other agencies in your area and your donor to recommend independent evaluators. Interview several agencies, get estimates for the work you want, select a group that best matches your needs and make inquiries about their ability to integrate qualitative and quantitative information. Plain Talk sites observed that a lot of the small yet important changes were picked up through the qualitative information gathering process.

2. **Develop an M&E plan.**
   - Decide what you want to find out. Think backwards, and imagine that you are at the end of your program: What information will you need to describe your program and its accomplishments?

   - Do you want to track behavior change as well as numbers of attendees? If so, establish a mechanism for getting behavioral information over time. Don't be overwhelmed by thinking that something as personal as sexual behaviors, or as intangible as attitudes and norms, cannot be tracked and measured. A good M&E specialist will show you how this can be done.

   - Are you doing what you planned to do? Look at what happened outside of the work plan: What in the process was unexpected? What accomplishments went beyond the plan? What changes or additions to the work plan were made?

   - Identify a core group or individual that has expertise and interest in conducting the M&E activity. Once a relationship is established, hold regular meetings with the evaluation team. Continually look at the evaluation process: Is it working? Why or why not? What else should be monitored?

   - Modify or fine-tune the M&E budget. Contact a local university or college to explore collaborative opportunities that benefit students and cost the project less.

   - Measure both outcome and process. For example, in measuring the outcome of the initiative, you want to answer the question, "Did the program achieve its goals?" Measuring the process is a way of tracking the activities leading to the goal. Questions relating to process measures might include: How many workshops were held? How many community events were held? How many people participated in the events?

   - Use information to address needs. If you learn that participants need more information, provide it. There is formal and informal monitoring. Formal monitoring provides information for reports to donors (usually on a regular schedule, such as quarterly or annually). Informal monitoring is a level of awareness maintained by staff in tracking program activities (i.e., knowing what is happening in the community and whether volunteers are getting the support they need). The information gathered from informal monitoring often provides the substance of staff meetings. Monitoring can be a tool to boost the morale and motivation of your program staff and volunteers by showing them their accomplishments along the way.

KEEPING TRACK WITH A MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (MIS)

Often, staff working on community-based programs are too busy implementing the programs to keep track of what is happening. Then, when they need to know the status of a particular activity, they don't have the information. Or worse, they find out at the end of a program that it got off course.

In Hartford, Plain Talk/Hablando Claro headed off these problems by setting up and using an MIS. First, they established a relationship with an evaluation agency that was experienced in all aspects of MIS. This agency developed the system, trained a Plain Talk staff person to maintain it and provided ongoing support.

With this system, Hartford was able to keep track of what was going on – how many and what type of people attended each event, which residents attended which sessions, how long people stayed involved with the project, how many people the program had reached to date, etc. Staff used this information to create reports and even as a database for generating mailing labels. They ensured confidentiality by limiting access to the MIS manager and the project director.

Tips

- Set up an MIS at the beginning of the program.
- Build in ways to measure not just numbers, but behavior change (which is not easy).
- Define as much as possible, up front, what you hope to accomplish so that your measures give you the information you need.
- When determining what information to track (ethnicity, age, gender, registered voters, etc.), include categories that are important to your understanding of the program's progress, but not so many that it becomes unwieldy. Keep it as simple as possible.
- Be patient – it's a lot of work up front to get the system running, but not much work to maintain it.
- Use the information throughout the program to guide your programming – maybe you are not reaching the specific subsection of the target population that you were hoping to, so you will need to rethink the activities and make adjustments.

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3. **Collect data.**
   Using your M&E plan as a guide, gather the information you need to track the progress of your program. This step will likely include ongoing as well as concrete activities. For example, you might develop forms that outreach workers will fill out as part of their regular work, as well as questionnaires that participants in education sessions will complete. You might also conduct in-depth surveys that will provide baseline and impact information.

4. **Analyze findings.**
   Program staff and advisors should work together in analyzing the data. Outside evaluators will need the input of local experts – members of the community – to correctly interpret the data in its appropriate context.

5. **Share information** about the effectiveness and progress of your program with residents, staff, donors, potential supporters and donors, and community decision-makers.

6. **Share program weaknesses** pointed out by the evaluation. They will increase the program's credibility regarding successes. Keep in mind that "mistakes" provide valuable lessons that can help to improve the program.

Sustainability

While no program manager wants to think about life after a project, it's important to focus on sustainability – ways to ensure that the community will continue to receive needed services or information after your specific effort is over.

Begin thinking about financial and organizational sustainability before the project ends. The process of extending the life of a program or making it, or parts of it, permanent cannot be rushed. It requires strategic planning – which in itself takes time – and more time to implement your ideas. Add this activity to your workplan a year or two before your funding runs out.

First, decide if the project should continue. Is it important to the community? Is it successful? Maybe there are components that should be made permanent. Once the community has decided that some or all of the efforts should continue, search for resources. You may want to try to get funding to continue the program as a separate entity, or you may decide to focus on integrating the successful parts of your program into an ongoing effort.

Section 2

PHOTO/PHIL FORTUNE, HARTFORD© 1997

Community Mapping

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The Plain Truth: Identifying Community Realities, Needs and Priorities

KEY POINTS

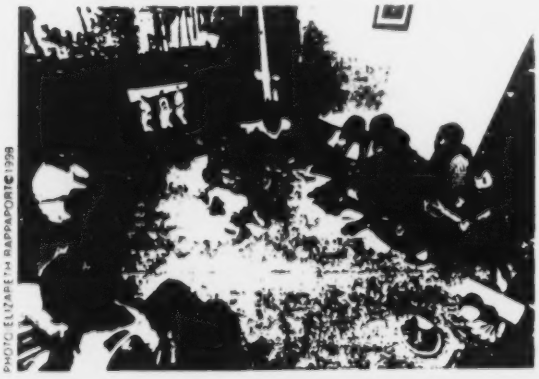
Do it – and do it well. This component is crucial. Some type of needs assessment must take place, and it must include members of the target audience.

Recruit community members to conduct the assessment. Not only will this help to make your results more accurate, it can also serve as the first mobilizing activity – a way to recruit people interested in your project.

Share the results community-wide. Information gathered through community mapping could be a catalyst for widespread community education as well as participation.

Description

Plain Talk found it crucial to get and use reliable information about the realities of the people in their communities. Existing statistics and information didn't tell the whole story. Much of the data that *did* exist had been collected by researchers from outside the community who had little understanding of the local situation. Sometimes, the information was wrong. As the first activity, each site conducted a type of formative research they called "community mapping."



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Community mapping helps residents to understand the human structure of their neighborhoods.

Pay close attention to the results. The information you receive may be contrary to what you believe or have read, but if the process was done well, it's probably more accurate.

FORMATIVE RESEARCH

Formative research will help you to develop and integrate the local vision into the program design of implementation. Activities, such as focus groups or surveys, involve members of the target population and are designed to gather information about their lives – their knowledge, attitudes, behaviors. Formative research allows programmers to figure out if information from other sources (e.g., census, health statistics, etc.) is valid for a particular group of people. It can also be used to get the target population's initial reaction to ideas for program activities.

Examples of formative research activities include:

- Surveys
- Focus group discussions
- In-depth interviews
- Pre-testing

Community mapping took the form of surveys which asked questions like, "Have your teens had intercourse?" and "How do you feel when your children ask you questions about sex?" The survey also asked some demographic-like questions that provided information they needed to develop the program. For example, "How far did you go in school?" or "Where do you go for medical care?"

Plain Talk sites took a unique approach to gathering information – they involved community members. Information gathering activities served as a "hook" to get people interested and ultimately involved in the program. Instead of being a separate, preliminary step, mapping became the first step in the process of resident involvement. They found that mapping gave community members a sense of community and program ownership, as well as interesting information about their community and the people who live there.

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HOW IT WORKED IN ATLANTA

Resident volunteers surveyed nearly 800 adults and youth in Mechanicsville during the community mapping exercise. Results showed that while one-half of the teens in the community said that a sexual relationship could interfere with their goals and plans, nearly 90 percent reported having had sex by age 17. Most adults said they had talked to teens about sex or pregnancy, but fewer youth said that this was true. Many youth told Plain Talk volunteers that they were not talking to their parents about sex, and many adults said they did not have all the information necessary to talk with their children about sex and sexuality.

The community mapping process motivated a group of residents to form the Mechanicsville Partners for Plain Talk. This group of men and women, elders, adults and youth took on the task of trying to create a program that would address the issues identified in the survey. Community members worked with the Community Coalition for Plain Talk (a group of service providers who serve the community) to design the program.

Through a lengthy series of meetings and retreats, Partners for Plain Talk decided that education and information sharing would be the primary community intervention. They believed that adults didn't talk to youth because they didn't know what to say. Plain Talk Partners created a variety of activities to help adults, not just parents, get the information, skills and resources they need to communicate with youth.

Because of the nature of the program, Plain Talk developed two surveys, one for adults and one for youth. They also recruited both adults and youth to conduct the surveys so that teens talked to teens, etc. The teen survey provided a reality check for adults and service providers. It shed light on the need for improved access to birth control as well as more sensitive and less judgmental service providers. When key findings of the assessment were shared, they served as an icebreaker for adults and teens. They also sparked dialogue and a call for action.

Mapping data guided residents and staff to develop program components and specific activities that were relevant to the community. For example, youth in one site reported that condoms sold in nearby stores were stored behind the counter, discouraging teens from buying them. After learning of this, the stores moved the condoms to a more accessible location.

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Steps

There are five general stages to community mapping:

1. Prepare
2. Conduct Community Mapping
3. Analyze Findings
4. Communicate Results
5. Use Results to Shape Program Objectives and Strategies

Each of these is broken down below into more specific steps.

1. Prepare

A. Pull together community residents, agencies and schools to discuss the initiative. Inform community gatekeepers (senior residents, leaders, etc.) of what you are doing and ask for their support – ask if they would be willing to make some initial calls to others in the community to let them know what is happening and to ask for their help.

B. Establish a relationship with research professionals who can help you develop survey instruments, train resident surveyors, and provide support and expertise to the program throughout the process. Include residents in this process.

C. Review community history and status as well as program goals and use them as a framework for developing the survey strategy.

D. Define the community and specific population(s) targeted by the program. Don't be limited by arbitrary definitions (city boundaries, etc.); find out what and whom the people living there think make up their community. Another idea is to give the team cameras and ask them to "map" the community visually.

A PRE-PLANNING TIP

Plain Talk sites in Atlanta and San Diego sent the survey team out into the community before they even started asking questions of other residents. They went out in small groups to "map" – in the more literal sense – the community. Each group was given a map of one segment of the neighborhood with only the streets identified. Their job was to indicate where stores, apartment buildings, vacant lots and abandoned buildings were and to plot the addresses (street numbers). The newly created maps were then used during the next phase of the mapping process to survey residents.

E. Recruit residents to be trained as coordinators and members of the "survey team." Determine acceptable incentives and payment. If possible, use community members who have been trained in conducting community surveys. Be selective and consider the capacity of the volunteers – can they deal with the content and paperwork of this activity? Also, be sure that your team members are reliable and credible.

F. In consultation with research professionals, select a research strategy that is manageable given the human and financial resources available to your program. Identify a point person.

RESOURCES NEEDED FOR COMMUNITY MAPPING

- Stipends for survey team – consider paying them a fair hourly wage for their work, including the training time
- Incentives for survey team training – food, childcare, etc.
- Incentives for respondents – $5–10 for each adult who filled out a survey and $3–5 for youth
- Clipboards, pens, program T-shirts and name tags for surveyors

G. Work with the researchers to develop the instruments. Include project staff, community agencies and residents.

TIPS FOR DEVELOPING THE INSTRUMENT

- Do not ask about income
- Do not ask for the names of youth, just the age and gender
- Use language that reflects the community members, i.e., use common terms and formulate the questions in a style that will work for the people answering them

H. Train residents to coordinate the effort and to conduct surveys. Hire them as temporary employees of the project. This allows for good organization of the activities, makes the research more legitimate and helps the surveyors take it more seriously. During the training, emphasize the need to follow protocol and ask questions correctly to ensure the collection of sound data.

TIPS FOR TRAINING THE SURVEY TEAM

- Take time to prepare surveyors – in Hartford, the training was two evenings a week for three weeks; in Atlanta it was three full days with one full day for practice. Both workshops were approximately 18 hours in total.
- Make it fun.
- Consult with residents to identify ways to counteract suspicion (in New Orleans, they explained that they would not report any information to the housing authority).
- Train residents in effective interpersonal communication skills. Emphasize that community members are "experts" on the topics addressed by the survey; surveyors should treat everyone with respect.
- Practice, practice, practice – use role plays and other exercises that give residents chances to practice talking to potential respondents and using the survey form.
- Consider including actual experiences in the training. Have newly trained surveyors go out and complete several surveys, then come back as a group and share what they learned ... what worked, what didn't and how they could do things better.

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I. Establish confidentiality safeguards and ways to enforce them. Confidentiality is a very important part of building a sense of respect and trust during the community mapping process.

J. Notify police and other local authorities (e.g., housing authority, building management, etc.) of your survey so they can provide protection and support. In some communities, this can be an opportunity to improve police/community relationships.

K. Inform the community in advance by sending out letters or flyers a week or two before the survey. Stress confidentiality and why this information is important (e.g., to develop a program to keep youth safe). Tell them about the incentive and provide a phone number so that people can call if they have questions.

L. Gather supplies – maps of the neighborhood, clipboards, name tags, survey instruments, pens, etc.

2. Conduct Community Mapping

A. Send interviewers out in pairs of one male and one female. This way, each team is always prepared to talk with either a male or a female.

B. Canvass the neighborhood over a specified period of time. The time period will depend on the number of surveys you need and the number of surveyors. One site conducted the mapping over a three-day weekend; another did it over a six-week period.

Young children have benefited from the involvement of their parents and older siblings in Plain Talk.

C. During the adult survey, interviewers can recruit youth to participate in the youth survey. In San Diego's case, parents of teens were given $5 vouchers that the teens could redeem if they came to the program office to be interviewed for positions as surveyors. This not only recruited youth, but also got parental approval/buy-in for the research.

3. Analyze Findings

A. Coordinators should collect data and validate surveys (randomly) on a daily basis. If surveys are not completely filled out, go back to the person to get more information.

B. Hand surveys over to researchers to enter data and prepare preliminary reports.

FILLING IN GAPS

In Seattle, community members found that it was nearly impossible for surveyors who speak only English to interview Southeast Asian adults with limited English proficiency. So, while a large percentage of people living in White Center were from Southeast Asia, less than 12 percent of the completed adult surveys were from this population. Southeast Asian teens, however, were fairly well represented in the teen results: 42 percent of those surveyed were from Cambodia, Vietnam or other Asian countries.

The advisory committee realized that they had to make some adjustments in how they reached the Asian community – especially the adults. They hired an outreach worker from Cambodia to work with the largest Southeast Asian population, Cambodians. She organized another round of mapping – this time using Cambodian residents who conducted the surveys in their local language. More than a year after the initial mapping exercise, Plain Talk White Center published the results of their second community mapping – which represented 130 Southeast Asian adults, primarily Cambodians. The outreach worker went on to develop specific programs for Cambodians in White Center. Later, the project used the same strategy to survey Vietnamese residents of White Center.

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C. Have community members work with research professionals to interpret findings. Ask, "Why did we get this number?" and "What's behind this finding?" This will help the community gain a more profound understanding of the results and the reality they reflect. It will also make the results more credible to community members.

D. If necessary, do more research and collect information. Plain Talk conducted focus groups to get more details from specific subgroups about certain topics. This data is used to shape strategies, so take time to pull it together well.

FOCUS GROUPS: LEARNING THE "WHY'S"

A focus group is a qualitative research method that helps to answer questions regarding how people feel about and why they do certain things. The methodology is relatively simple to learn and, while it takes a bit of time to conduct a focus group and analyze the findings, it can provide a wealth of information that can help you design an effective program.

Focus groups are small discussion groups. Eight to ten people of the same subgroup of the target population (for example, young African American women between the ages of 12 and 15, or Hispanic mothers of teenagers) are brought together and led, by a facilitator, through a guided discussion on a particular topic. The facilitator probes to get to the reasons behind behaviors and feelings. Interaction between group members brings up different issues than in one-on-one interviews.

4. Communicate Results

A. Compile a full report for potential partners and donors; make a more user-friendly report for community members. Prioritize the findings, then break them down and explain in simple terms what they mean. You might want to create a bulleted list that includes statements like, "Most kids said they couldn't talk to their parents about sex."

B. Present key findings to the community. You might hold a community meeting or ask for time during an already-planned community gathering. San Diego staff decided to work through the schools to bring parents to the meetings because they knew Mexican parents respond well to requests from school staff. They sent home flyers with each student announcing the meeting and requesting parental attendance.

C. During the meeting, don't just present the information; use it to open a discussion. Encourage dialog between adults and teens. **Ask** residents what they think about the information and how they think the issues could be addressed. Also, use this as an opportunity to share information about your program and to solicit participation. Be prepared with details and dates of specific activities, and invite residents to attend.

5. Design a Program Based on Findings

A. Community mapping data will produce neighborhood information about attitudes, beliefs and knowledge of the residents as well as the resources. Use the findings to design components of your program. For example, if you learned that youth do not have access to a health clinic that serves their needs, you may want to expand your program to include advocacy for teen clinics (other sections in the Starter Kit talk more about how to design a program based on the community's reality).

B. Keep information accessible and use it throughout your program. Refer back from time to time to ensure that you are staying on track, by addressing real community issues.

"When they first came to me and asked me to do the community mapping I said, 'I don't know if I want to do that.' But it was excellent. I found out so much... it was something that really opened my eyes."

Teresa Crumpton, Community Organizer
for PlainTalk Hartford

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How Community Mapping Information Impacted Program Design

In [community, city]...	Mapping Results Showed That...	So Plain Talk Decided To...
Mechanicsville, Atlanta	almost 90 percent of the teens reported having had sex by the time they were 17 and 57 percent have had sex by age 13. 70 percent of teens said they could talk to their parents about sexual matters, but fewer than 50 percent said that they have. 60 percent of adults said they have talked to teens about sex or pregnancy, but only 50 percent of teens said that this is true.	make education and information sharing the primary intervention. Since a strong reason adults didn't talk to youth was because they didn't know what to say, Plain Talk decided to help neighborhood adults get the information they need by working with the local health department to create "Askable Adults," a workshop designed to help adults, not just parents, get the information, skills and resources they need. They also used Plain Talk Parties to spread the information and messages to more community members.
Stowe Village, Hartford	parents and other adults in Stowe Village feel comfortable talking to youth about the repercussions of sexual activity, but not about sexuality and sexual behavior. 80 percent of youth said they can talk to their parents, but only 40 percent have discussed contraceptives.	develop a communication strategy that includes peer education for youth (facilitating conversations between older and younger youth) , and training for adults – helping them deliver the program messages to their children and other adults. The project also developed two 12-week courses, one for adults and one for youth. Another part of the strategy included getting service providers to talk about how best to address the expressed health care needs of adolescents in the community.
St. Thomas, New Orleans	by the age of 17, 80 percent of teens are having sex; more than one-half of adults believe that teen girls will be pregnant before they are 20; and 43 percent think that the girl will end up raising the child alone.	create a community strategy that focuses on strengthening the family structure and encouraging all community members to take responsibility for the youth and children of St. Thomas. The project developed a comprehensive peer educator program, making the peer educators the primary vehicles for reaching the families in the community. The "Walkers & Talkers" coordinated community festivals and Home Health Parties as ways to share knowledge and promote the community strategy.
White Center, Seattle	parents and teens rarely, if ever, talk about sexuality. 67 percent of youth reported that they were sexually active by the time they were 19. And while almost 75 percent of adults acknowledged this, less than one-half thought that *their* children were having sex before they were 19. Parents were unable to identify resources to help them improve their communication with youth about sex.	develop an education program for parents. Plain Talk for Parents is a four-part series of classes designed to help parents talk with their children about dating, sex, health, sexually transmitted diseases, drug abuse and decision-making. The classes focus on communication skills and encourage parents to become advocates to ensure that high-quality services are available to youth in White Center.
Barrio Logan, San Diego	by the time they are 16, 50 percent of teens in Barrio Logan will have had a sexual experience, and by the time they are 18, three out of every four sexually active teen girls will get pregnant. Most youth surveyed said they would prefer to get information about sexuality from their parents; meanwhile, parents reported that they are too embarrassed and don't know how and what to say to their teens.	focus on improving communication between Latino teens and adults. They recruited and trained *promotoras*, peer educators, and developed an in-depth, four-session workshop, *Vecino a Vecino* (Neighbor-to-Neighbor), to be held in people's homes. The curriculum for the workshop is culturally and linguistically appropriate and encourages adults to rethink how they view sex and sexuality and to consider discussing

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Trouble Shooting

- **A significant number of people in the community speak a different language.** You can't expect a community member who does not speak English as his or her first language to be willing or able to answer a survey in English. Plain Talk Seattle ended up conducting three separate surveys for the adults in White Center – one in English, one in Cambodian and one in Vietnamese. Know who lives in your community – this will help you be prepared with appropriate language materials and instruments.

- **Mappers have difficulty talking about personal issues like sex.** Don't assume that mappers are knowledgable about or comfortable discussing sex. Help your community mapping team feel comfortable discussing personal issues by emphasizing how important it is to get this type of information to develop a successful program. Give them plenty of chances to practice asking questions and discussing personal topics in role plays and other practical exercises. Assure confidentiality.

- **The advisory group or lead agency wants to save the budget for implementation and not release incentives.** Sometimes, programs encounter resistance to paying incentives to survey respondents or focus group participants, or even to rewarding volunteers in this way. Plain Talk Atlanta had a simple justification – they were paying for services, just as they would for any other professional service. They also believed that this was one way they could give something back to community members.

- **Organizational partners or advisors disagree with residents' interpretation of the results,** believing that conventional programming or expert opinion should lead the effort rather than the opinions of people from the community. Allowing a program to be directed by the people it is to serve can be a new way of thinking for some managers and staff. Remind them of the research results, and that program decisions were based directly on what was learned from the community. Share the successes of other programs that were designed through this participatory process. Emphasize that program implementation will be constantly monitored to ensure that each component is effective and all parts of the program are leading toward achieving program goals. If changes are needed, they will be made.

- **Respondents are suspicious.** In several of the Plain Talk sites, mappers encountered residents who were suspicious of the survey. Some residents had previous experience with surveys and other studies being used against them, in some cases to get information that could lead to drug busts, in others to identify people who were living in an apartment but were not on the lease, or who did not have legal immigration papers. Mappers were trained to assure people that the information they collected was only for the project and would not be shared with any other agency. They informed respondents of the ways in which confidentiality was being protected. They also explained why they were there – that "we need to know about our young people so we can help them." In addition, they had phone numbers that they gave out to people who wanted to verify the purpose or validity of the survey.

- **The process seems too complex and overwhelming and staff begin searching for shortcuts.** Community mapping is, in many ways, the most critical step in your program development. If you don't know what your community does and feels and wants, you can't expect to be effective. Even if you, or others in the community, *think* you know what is going on, you need to verify it by talking to members of the community. Resist the urge to take shortcuts or rely on opinions. Do the research and *know* the truth.

Resources

Adult Survey 2:1
Adolescent Survey
(Community Mapping Instrument used by Plain Talk San Diego) 2:4

Plain Talk
Adult Survey

We are surveying residents of this community this week in preparation for a new program that will be created by _____. We want to ask about your opinions and experiences with regard to teenagers, sex and pregnancy. The survey will only take a few minutes but your personal opinions are important to us. Let me start by asking you what you think about...

1. By the time teenagers graduate from high school in this community, about what percent do you think have had sexual intercourse?
   _____%

2. About what percent of girls in this community would you say become pregnant before age 20?
   _____%

3. What would you say most girls do who get pregnant?
   1 Have an abortion
   2 Put the child up for adoption
   3 Raise the child themselves, or
   4 Marry and raise the child with a husband

4. Do you feel that teenagers who are having intercourse <u>should</u> be able to get birth control without anyone's permission?
   1 yes
   2 no
   3 don't know

5. Can they do that in this community now?
   1 yes
   2 no
   3 don't know

6. Do you know of anyplace in your community where teens can go for contraceptives?
   1 yes (where?) _____
   2 no
   3 don't know

7. We want to ask you to tell us a little about how comfortable you feel talking about various subjects with young people. For each topic just tell me if you would be very comfortable, somewhat comfortable, somewhat uncomfortable or very uncomfortable.

What about:	Very comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Somewhat uncomfortable	Very uncomfortable
talking with teens about sex				
talking with teens about birth control				
talking with teens about sexually transmitted diseases				
talking with teens about AIDS				
talking with teens about pregnancy				
talking with teens about menstruation				
talking with teens about homosexuality				

8 When my children come to me with questions about sex, my immediate feelings might be: (check all that apply)

__relief
__anxiety (panic)
__disappointment
__frustration
__happiness
__fear
__worry
__anger
__other (what?) _____

9 When my children come to me with questions about sex, my immediate action might be to: (check all that apply)

__ seek information
__ joke about it
__ send them to someone else
__ ignore them
__ punish them
__ be supportive
__ stop what I am doing and engage in discussion
__ step back and think through my response
__ other (what?) _____

10 For parents of teens: We want to ask you about how some important decisions might be made in your household. What about decisions about your teenager and...

Dating... Which of the following would be most likely?

__ my child makes his/her own decisions
__ we discuss it but my child has the final say
__ we make decisions together
__ we discuss it but I have the final say
__ I make the decisions

Birth control issues... What about decisions about whether your teen uses birth control?

__ my child makes his/her own decisions
__ we discuss it but my child has the final say
__ we make decisions together
__ we discuss it but I have the final say
__ I make the decisions

What about whether to have a baby?

__ my child makes his/her own decisions
__ we discuss it but my child has the final say
__ we make decisions together
__ we discuss it but I have the final say
__ I make the decisions

11. What about talking about sex and pregnancy with your own teens: Have you ever had an opportunity to do that?

1 yes
2 no

12. To your knowledge, have your own teens ever had intercourse?

1 yes, all have
2 yes, some have
3 no, none have
4 I don't know

13. Suppose your teen son were to come to you and say that he needed protection or birth control because he is having sex. What would you say or do?

_____

_____

_____

_____

14. Now imagine that your teen daughter asks for help getting protection or birth control. What would you say or do?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Now we have some questions about you:

15. Gender
    1 male
    2 female

16. Age: _____/_____/_____
    Month Day Year

17. Ethnicity:
    1 African American
    2 White
    3 Hispanic
    4 Native American
    5 Asian
    6 other (what)
    _____

18. Employment:
    1 Professional
    2 Technical
    3 Manager/administration
    4 Sales
    5 Service
    6 Clerical
    7 Transport
    8 Laborer
    9 Farm
    10 Private household
    11 Unemployed

19. Housing:
    1 own home/condo
    2 rent house
    3 rent apartment
    4 shelter
    5 homeless
    6 other

20. Living Arrangements:
    1 with immediate family
    2 with extended family
    3 with friends
    4 in shelter
    5 on street

A group of community residents here in _____ is meeting to plan strategies for protecting our sexually active youth from pregnancy and disease. We are talking about what adults can do to help protect teens. Do you think you might be interested in such a team?

___ no

___ yes (if yes, get name and telephone number) _____

_____

_____)_____

Plain Talk
Adolescent Survey

We're surveying teens in this neighborhood this week for a new program that will be started _____ We don't need your name and this information will be absolutely confidential It will take only a few minutes.

1. We want you to imagine that a friend tells you that he or she has a drug or alcohol problem. Your friend wants to know where to get help with the problem. Can you suggest a place to go?

1 No (go to question 2) **2 Yes (please answer A through G)**

A. What is the name of the place where you would send your friend? (write name on line)

_____

B. Do you know where this place is?	1 No 2 Yes, I know about where it is 3 Yes, I know exactly where it is (where?) _____
C. Is there a way for a young person to get to this place alone or would they have to have someone drive them?	1 They would need someone to drive 2 You can get there by bus 3 You can get there some other way (how?) _____ 4 I don't know
D. Do you know how much it would cost to get services there?	1 No 2 Yes (about how much?) _____
E. Do you know anybody who has ever been to this place?	1 No 2 Yes
F. Do young people have to have permission from parents or guardians to get services at this place?	1 I don't know 2 Yes, they do 3 No, they don't
G. Do you think that the people at this place tell parents or guardians when a young person goes there?	1 I don't know 2 They probably do 3 They probably don't

2. Here's a different problem. What if your friend were having sex and wanted some kind of birth control or contraceptive. Can you suggest a place to go?

1 No (go to question 3) **2 Yes (please answer A through G)**

A. What is the name of the place where you would send your friend? (write name on line)

_____

B. Do you know where this place is?	1 No 2 Yes, I know about where it is 3 Yes, I know exactly where it is (where?) _____
C. Is there a way for a young person to get to this place alone or would they have to have someone drive them?	1 They would need someone to drive 2 You can get there by bus 3 You can get there some other way (how?) _____ 4 I don't know
D. Do you know how much it would cost to get services there?	1 No 2 Yes (about how much?) _____
E. Do you know anybody who has ever been to this place?	1 No 2 Yes
F. Do young people have to have permission from parents or guardians to get services at this place?	1 I don't know 2 Yes, they do 3 No, they don't
G. Do you think that the people at this place tell parents or guardians when a young person goes there?	1 I don't know 2 They probably do 3 They probably don't

3. If your friend wanted to talk to someone about sexuality issues, could you suggest an adult that he or she could talk to who would understand, help, and keep your friend's business private?

	CIRCLE ONE	
Do you know a teacher at school to talk to?	Yes	No
Do you know someone else at school to talk to? What does that person do at school? _____	Yes	No
Do you know an adult friend of your family that your friend could talk to?	Yes	No
Could your friend talk to your own parents or guardian about problems?	Yes	No
Is there some other relative of yours that you could send your friend to?	Yes	No
Do you know a pastor at a church that your friend could talk to about these problems?	Yes	No
Do you know anyone else at church your friend could talk to?	Yes	No
Is there any other adult you know that your friend could talk to about his or her problems? Who is that person? _____	Yes	No

4. Do you know anyone ages 10 to 19 who has ever tried to get birth control or a contraceptive?

1 No (go to question 5)	2 Yes (please answer A, B, C, and D)
A. Where did they go?	1 I don't know, or 2 (please write name) _____
B. Did they tell you about what happened to them there?	1 Yes 2 No
C. Overall did they say it was	1 A pretty good place to go 2 An okay place to go 3 A pretty bad place to go, or 4 An awful place to go

D. If they said it was bad or awful, do you know why?

_____

_____

Now we want your opinion on some issues. Just answer true or false for each.

	TRUE	FALSE	DON'T KNOW
5. When I ask questions about sex, my parents give me honest answers.			
6. It is all right for two people to have sex before marriage if they are in love.			
7. People should never take "no" for an answer if they want to have sex.			
8. Sexual relationships make life too difficult when you are young.			
9. Two people having sex should use some form of birth control if they aren't ready for a child.			
10. No one should pressure another person into sexual activity.			
11. If a girl has sex only once in a while, she really doesn't need birth control.			
12. I can talk to my parents about sexual matters.			
13. Birth control is not very important			
14. Sexual abstinence (not having sexual intercourse) is the best choice for adolescents.			
15. I am confused about what I should and should not do sexually.			
16. A sexual relationship, at this time in my life, could interfere with my future goals and plans.			

17. Have you ever talked to either one of your parents about sex?
    1 no
    2 yes – which one? _____

18. Have you ever talked to either of your parents about using contraception?
    1 no
    2 yes – which one? _____

19. How do your parents feel, or how do you think they would feel, about your having intercourse?
    1 they would support me
    2 they would accept this, but say little
    3 they would disapprove of my doing this

20. How do your parents feel, or how do you think they would feel about your using contraception?
    1 they would support me
    2 they would accept this, but say little
    3 they would disapprove of my doing this

21. Have you ever had sexual intercourse?
    1 no
    2 yes
    If yes, how old were you the first time? _____

22. Do either of your parents know that you have had intercourse?
    1 no
    2 yes

23. How often do you use some form of protection when you have intercourse? Is it?
    1 every time
    2 most of the time
    3 sometimes
    4 hardly ever
    5 never

24. What do you use? Is it?
    1 condoms
    2 pills
    3 foam
    4 condom/foam
    4 sponge
    5 IUD
    6 Diaphragm
    7 other – what? _____

25. Are you a	___ Male, or ___ Female
26. What is your ethnicity?	___ African American ___ Hispanic ___ White ___ Something else (what?) _____
27. How old are you?	_____ years old
28. What is the zip code where you live?	___/___/___/___/___
29. If you know, tell us how you or your parents pay for your medical care. Is it...	1 With Medicaid or SSI 2 With private insurance 3 Out of their own pocket or 4 Some other way? 5 I don't know
30. How far did your mother go in school? Was it...	1 Less than high school 2 She finished high school 3 She went to some college 4 She finished college or more
31. Where do you usually go for medical care?	1 A private doctor 2 A hospital emergency room (which one?) _____ 3 A hospital clinic (which one?) _____ 4 Some other clinic (which one?) _____ 5 Someplace else (where?) _____

A group of community residents here in _____ is meeting to plan strategies for protecting sexually active youth from pregnancy and disease. We are talking about what adults can do to help protect teens. Do you think you might be interested in such a team?

___ no
___ yes (if yes, get name and telephone number) _____
_____
( )_____

Section 3

PHOTO ELIZABETH HAPPAPORT 1990

Resident Network

Building a network woven with community members is key to any community-based program. Plain Talk folks found that it was also important to develop partnerships with people and agencies outside the community. These partnerships enhanced the program by adding resources, support and experience. Therefore, this section is divided into two chapters: Creating Equity Among Partners and Developing Partnerships Beyond the Community.

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Stakeholders: Creating Equity Among Partners

KEY POINTS

Focus on building relationships among informal leaders, residents and organizational partners.

Develop and continually support strong group process skills. To be effective, members of resident boards will need to work well together and address hard issues within the group.

Provide training as needed. Bring in appropriate trainers to help the group make decisions or work better together.

Description

Good relationships were key to Plain Talk's ability to achieve successful community engagement. Groups of community members formed partnerships that helped the project get into the communities, be accepted by the communities and make an impact on them.

Relationship building is key to this component. Much of Plain Talk's first year, the planning year, was spent building relationships with the communities. Staff and others related to the project expressed respect and appreciation for the communities and their residents. Conversely, residents expressed trust and respect for organizations and institutions that demonstrated sincerity and genuine commitment. And it paid off.

SAN DIEGO'S RESIDENT BOARD

The people who have been and still are the guiding force of this vision are the members of the Barrio Logan Community Core Group. This group was developed soon after the community mapping process and is made up mostly of community members (both adults and teens) with some agency representatives. The group received community leadership and empowerment training to be an effective voice in Barrio Logan. Currently, more than 60 residents of Barrio Logan participate in the core group.

Steps

1. **Conduct a thorough community mapping process** (see Section 2 of this publication). This activity, if done in a truly participatory way, lays the foundation for an active resident board.

2. **Learn as much as you can about the community.**
   - Is there already a coalition or resident body that can serve your purposes? (e.g., a resident council or neighborhood action coalition)
   - Identify the leaders – both recognized and informal. Get leaders and gatekeepers (e.g., tenants' associations) together and ask them who the leaders are and who else (beyond leaders) should be involved.
   - Identify community problems and resources – learn from the leaders and your community mapping research, talk to community agencies, churches, etc., review your community-mapping data.
   - Don't forget to include adolescents, elders and other segments of the community.

3. **Determine your leadership development goals.** Do you want to build new leaders or use the established strengths of the leaders who are already there?

4. **Decide how important it is to your program to have an accurate cross-section of the community.** If you agree that this is important, you may have to do more targeted recruiting. Senior citizens, youth, church groups – use focus group discussions to get information on how to engage different sectors and to find out about formal and informal coalitions/relationships.

5. **Find out what size the group should be.** Ask potential members about the optimal size of the group: How many people are they comfortable with? How many people do they think could be effective in reaching the board's goals? You might decide to keep the group size down to about 20, or have a full board of 50-60 and a smaller group of about 15 or so for decision-making.

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6. **Recruit interested community members.** This can be done through existing leadership in the community, or in a more open way – hold a community event and ask interested people to sign up. Recruiting resident participation is an ongoing, time-consuming and slow process, so don't rush it.

7. **Use incentives to attract resident participation in board activities.** Use raffles and promotional items (such as coffee cups, T-shirts and pens) to motivate people to attend. Don't forget to provide support such as childcare, transportation and snacks.

IDEAS FOR INCENTIVES

Be creative about incentives. Consider:

- Sponsoring weekend retreats
- Holding meetings off-site
- Printing project T-shirts and sweatshirts or key chains

The best incentives are intrinsic. Offer residents:

- Leadership positions
- Skill development
- Visibility in the community
- Acknowledgment for improving their community
- Respect

Remember that you want people to be involved so that they support the change, not because they expect to get paid.

8. **Bring representatives together** to review program objectives and strategies that are based on community mapping results. Work in small groups that encourage participation. Prioritize needs and connect your program to the broader problems and issues facing the community. Ask how they feel about this new project; ask their permission to come in to the community; ask how they want to address the issue.

9. **Establish relationships.** Build trust between members. Consider developing a commitment pledge. Determine how decisions will be made. If you aim to reach a consensus, consider training board members in this process. Also, ask residents to facilitate meetings and set agendas. Encourage them to ask questions and verbalize their opinions.

COMPONENTS OF A RESIDENT BOARD

- Broad-based need
- A common vision
- A relevant mission
- A specific and achievable action plan
- A leader

10. **Involve the community in the development of a strategic workplan.** It should be as holistic as possible; consider including activities that support community, family, emotional, physical and financial well-being. Let residents know what the project can offer (i.e., leadership development and capacity-building for board members and staff) and include activities related to this in the strategic plan. Be sure to have "keepers of the plan," or empower the entire board to play this role. Establish that any changes in the workplan must involve the group.

11. **Hold regular meetings with consistent agendas.** Consistency builds trust. Ask staff and members of subcommittees to report on their activities, and encourage board members to offer feedback. Reinforce the concept of accountability in the meetings – the project is accountable to the community and the resident board represents the community. This will strengthen participation and trust.

12. **Build in activities** to increase participants' knowledge about the program and to practice the skills acquired as a result of the program.

13. **Ensure that the program stays consistent with community norms.** This will help people to stay engaged. Provide checks and balances that monitor community norms.

Tips for Group Process

- **Establish social norms** for the board. Encourage regular attendence and respect for others during meetings. Set ground rules for the process of the gatherings.

- Keep the **Rule of Patience.** Listening and responding to diverse points of view takes time; building confidence and a sense of investment among people who have not had a history of authority/control takes time; reaching consensus takes time. This process cannot be rushed.

- Especially at the beginning, **let everyone have a chance to talk.** The group doesn't have to move on every issue that comes up, but let the process develop as one where all are welcome to contribute and participate. Set meeting rules. For example, there are no dumb questions, respect the opinion of others.

- **Build on board members' existing strengths.** Learn the skills and interests of each member, and find ways that he or she can use those attributes in their role.

- **Ensure that it is a learning process.** Members should get more than a trophy or T-shirt for their participation. Help them develop leadership skills – abilities and strengths they can use in other parts of their lives. Skills might include making oral presentations, using their own words to explain program messages, and attending meetings and reporting back on what was learned.

- Emphasize that **board members should "practice what they preach."** They should be role models and mentors for other community members. Consider having community leaders create a mutually agreed-upon "Standard of Leadership" which describes their shared values and behaviors.

- Remember that **people bring their problems and issues with them.** They are likely to have the same issues as your target audience. So, offer support for your board members.

- Don't concentrate on getting a core group that will stay for years – **help members train others to take their place.** By including more people in the resident board, you help to ensure that the impact of the program outlasts the program itself. Recruitment is an on-going process. "Life" happens.

- **Be open to anyone who wants to participate** and ensure that they are effectively involved. Figure out how you can use their strengths in the most productive way. Find a role for everyone. If someone is painfully shy, don't ask him or her to make a presentation; rather, help him or her become actively involved in a way that feels comfortable.

PLANNING YEAR MILESTONES

When Plain Talk sites began their first year of project implementation, they had a list of milestones (provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation). These milestones helped everyone involved with the project keep their goals for the planning year in focus, and oriented new board members by giving them a clear sense of what Plain Talk was and what it was not. The milestones were:

- Planning and building consensus about core messages and strategies
- Defining the community members' understanding of adolescent sexuality
- Understanding community attitudes and behaviors
- Describing community resources and services
- Effectively disseminating what was learned
- Involving men
- Understanding the health service needs of young people
- Understanding HIV prevalence among adolescents as well as the existing needs for education and condom accessibility

"Plain Talk began with young people and adults sitting in a room together... shar[ing] their opinions. Some young people said they had never been in a room with people who disagreed and then nobody got slapped or shot or cut. Where someone listened. Where people could say what they wanted to say and where their opinions were important. Where what they think could make a difference to a community..."

Cheryl Boykins, Coordinator
of Plain Talk Atlanta

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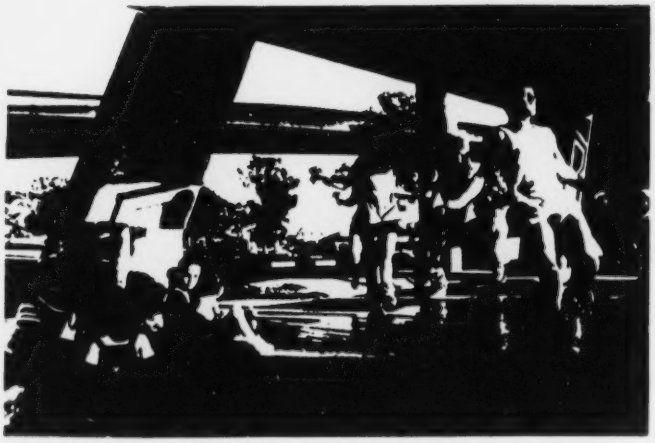

Barrio Logan's strong sense of culture is visible throughout the neighborhood – and throughout the project's activities.

Trouble Shooting

- **It is difficult to maintain momentum after the initial excitement for the project subsides.** Emphasize that the project offers possibilities to community members (e.g., employment opportunities and skills development). Ensure that the program offers ongoing activities. Keep reminding participants of the project's goals and objectives.

- **Project or lead agency staff may begin to feel threatened by the resident board.** You may find that some people involved in overseeing the project fear that the board will become "too strong." Reinforce that the board must be empowered and allowed to do its job – even if this means that it may one day *take over* and lead the project in a more direct way. This may, in reality, demonstrate successful leadership of skills development.

- **The board needs help working through group challenges.** The time may come when the resident board needs help to be effective. It may need training in conflict resolution, decision-making or dealing with change. Consider bringing in consultants with appropriate cultural and linguistic skills to transfer know-how or facilitate discussions.

- **Recognize ethnic differences, but don't assume that you know how best to address the group's needs.** At the beginning of the project, Plain Talk Hartford separated participants into two groups – Latinos and African Americans – thinking that this was the best way to respect the different cultures. But it didn't work. The two groups resented the division; they wanted to work together. So the project merged the groups together, and they worked successfully throughout the project. On-going dialogue with participants during this process is critical.

- **Change makes board members uncomfortable.** Change is normal; you can't always hold rigid to your initial workplan, but you do have to keep an eye on the overall goals and priorities. Let board members know from the beginning that change is part of the process. Acknowledge that change could mean that things will look different. Remind them that change will pass and that what unites them is their commitment to the program's goals. Remember to continue doing the project's work, even during times of change. Help those who are most resistant to change deal with it – either individually or in groups.

- **"Under-the-table talk" threatens cooperation and respect.** Successful resident boards require good group process skills; don't be afraid to address undertones or gossip. Get people to speak out during meetings and provide an environment for them to find their voice.

Resources (located at the end of Section 3)

Plain Talk Core Group Members Description of Roles & Responsibilities (Plain Talk New Orleans) 3:1

A Checklist of Planning Year Milestones (from The Plain Talk Strategic Planning Guide) 3:2

Reaching Out: Developing Partnerships Beyond the Neighborhood

KEY POINTS

Build relationships of influence. Find ways to effectively connect with other agencies and individuals who are working with your community, or on similar projects in other parts of your city. Consider reaching out to less obvious outlets, like theater and art groups.

Encourage cooperation and discourage competition. Make a conscious effort in your partnerships to work together, and acknowledge that this effort is different from a more common approach, which involves competition. Think about creating a formal agreement of understanding that outlines the programs goals and objectives.

Description

This chapter is about reaching out beyond neighborhood members to connect with additional opinion makers, advocates and other stakeholders. Partnerships, whether informal or formal, are likely to strengthen your program and improve the services offered to your community and other communities. Connections and partnerships help you to leverage program resources and expand and sustain your impact.

Some of the Plain Talk sites established distinct coalitions or working groups with outside agencies. (see Hartford's Advisory Council description and list in the Resources Section) Others joined existing groups and brought their project's issues to the table; sat on committees that addressed related issues; spoke to state legislatures or in hearings; or took advantage of other opportunities that came up, such as community forums and public events.

Relationships outside the neighborhood are important for many reasons. Use them to:

- **Bring your issues to the forefront of the larger community.** Relationships with other groups build recognition and awareness of your project and provide a forum for educating the larger community about your issues and activities. Established partnerships increase partner investments in your project. The more that your message gets out, the better chance you have of getting support and commitments to advance your agenda.
- **Find out who is doing what** in the broader community and provide an opportunity for agencies to pool resources – share training and communications materials, even staff expertise.
- **Improve services for your community.** The information you offer can help providers respond more effectively to the needs of community members. Providers can also help to ensure that consistent messages are getting out.
- **Help develop resources to support fundraising efforts,** e.g., get strong letters of support to strengthen grant requests.
- **Ensure cooperation and collaboration among multiple organizations.** It is important to develop common interests and a common mission.
- **Limit competition.** When other agencies know what you are doing and how your program is different from theirs, they are less threatened by your presence. While it is common for programs or agencies to be concerned that a new project will compete for funding and other resources, the truth is that all these groups may complement each other and have much to gain by partnering.

POSSIBLE PARTNERS

- State and local officials
- Public agencies – health departments, etc.
- Health care providers
- Other initiatives or campaigns with related goals
- School or PTA representatives
- Chamber of Commerce or neighborhood business associations
- Churches, temples or ecumenical associations
- Local coalitions on related topics (e.g., teen pregnancy prevention network or STD prevention council)
- Local universities and colleges
- Local chapters of national organizations, such as The Urban League or The National Association of Black Women
- Prominent individuals with roots in or ties to the community
- Private industry
- Arts and cultural centers

Steps

1. **Determine the purposes of the partnership.** What are you going to ask of the members? What do you offer?

2. **Identify potential partners.** Powerful partners help. In terms of individuals within agencies, select people who can make decisions – those who do not have to go back to others to get approval. You also want frontline workers, the "do-ers."

3. **Establish a mutual "action agenda."** Decide what the group wants to see happen in the broader community.

4. **Develop a core committee** to move the agenda. Continue to develop committees to serve specific needs.

SETTING UP A PROVIDER WORK GROUP

- Assess what is happening
- Identify gaps and determine what is needed
- Set up a work group and meet regularly
- Select members who are decision-makers and who are familiar with realities of the community

Trouble Shooting

- Providers are resistant to change. They can be apathetic, preferring to continue doing things the same way they have always done them rather than trying something new. Find the points of shared interest and show how working together can directly further their own agenda.

- Agencies compete with each other. Some agencies, or individuals within agencies, are threatened by other groups. They may be afraid that you will take away resources, or will get more credit. Demonstrate your good will and explain that collaborating, rather than "shooting in the dark," will eliminate unnecessary competition and duplication of effort.

- People from other agencies seem intimidated. Sometimes people are intimidated by true grassroots organizing. Let them learn your strengths and see the benefits of your work over time – they may come around.

Resources

Plain Talk/Hablando Claro Hartford's Advisory Council 3:4

"Plain Talk raised awareness of STDs and teen pregnancy, brought about collaboration within the community, a sense of empowerment within the community. It also brought a sense of community – of people working together as a whole. Before, everyone was doing their individual thing, now we are a collaboration of people coming together to make this community a better place to live."

VonKeith Jackson, Manhood Coordinator of Plain Talk New Orleans

PLAIN TALK CORE GROUP MEMBERS

DESCRIPTION OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITES

Objectives:

To develop leadership for overall community empowerment
and the protection of sexually active youth.

Characteristics/Abilities:

- To be committed to the mission and goals of the St. Thomas Resident Council and St. Thomas/Irish Channel Consortium.
- To work for the accomplishment of goals and objectives of Plain Talk as defined by community residents.
- To serve as community leaders and role models at all times.
- To volunteer as requested by the St. Thomas Resident Council.
- To assure that all information related to Plain Talk is completely confidential as outlined in the confidentiality policy.

Responsibilities:
(Note: As outlined in Plain Talk First Year Implementation strategy).

- Participation in all required Plain Talk activities, for example:
    - Training of community Walkers/Talkers
    - Evaluation training and activities
    - Assist in development of Plain Talk Awareness Curriculum
    - Facilitation of Home Health Parties
    - Support Plain Talk staff in implementing all activities
- Community Organizing and Mobilization
    - Canvass and contact residents door-to-door regarding information on Plain Talk.
    - Organize meetings to educate the general community.

A CHECKLIST OF PLANNING YEAR MILESTONES

	PLANNING AND BUILDING CONSENSUS
	◆ A description of the characteristics of those involved in the planning process ◆ A description of the processes by which this group has planned together ◆ Evidence that all planning stages are completed: a description of the goals, objectives, and principles agreed to by the group
	DEFINING THE COMMUNITY
	◆ A written description of the target community for Plain Talk activities, including location, residents and general characteristics
	UNDERSTANDING THE COMMUNITY'S ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS
	◆ A complete description of the content of the relevant sexuality attitudes and behaviors in the community and communication patterns and messages between adults and teens ◆ A description of how this information was gathered
	COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND SERVICES
	◆ A detailed description of the community's current service package for protecting sexually active young people, including strengths and weaknesses ◆ A description of how these data were collected
	EFFECTIVE DISSEMINATION OF WHAT IS LEARNED
	◆ Identify priority problems, issues and the tangible products used to facilitate information dissemination ◆ A description of the target populations to receive information ◆ A chronicle of the events and methods by which products were disseminated to this population

A CHECKLIST OF PLANNING YEAR MILESTONES

PLAIN TALK IS ABOUT MALES TOO

- A description of how adult men were involved in the planning process
- A description of the differences between young men and young women in the community in their needs, behaviors, and attitudes about sexuality, contraceptive use and pregnancy
- A description of the perceptions of adults in the community about appropriate sexuality related behaviors for young men and young women
- A description of how the implementation plan will achieve full partnership for young men and women in being adequately protected

THE BEST SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

- A description of how the characteristics of effective service delivery systems apply to the services in the community
- A description of what other models have been considered

HIV INFECTION AND ADOLESCENTS

- The HIV prevalence rates in the community
- A description of what HIV education programs exist for the young people who will be served
- A description of how accessible condoms are for young people
- A description of what additional education or services may be needed to facilitate protection from HIV and other STD's among the young people in the community

Plain Talk/Hablando Claro Hartford's Advisory Council

The Advisory Council is made up of representatives from institutions who have an interest in Stowe Village, Plain Talk/Hablando Claro and the issues of teen pregnancy and HIV/AIDS prevention. These institutions also have ongoing activities in Stowe Village and some have been involved with Plain Talk/Hablando Claro since its inception. The council provides advice, collaborative opportunities and the sharing of resources.

Advisory Council members include:

Sarah Miller, Regional Director, State of CT, Department of Social Services
Dr. Frederick Adams, Hartford Action Plan on Infant Health, Board of Directors
Earl Shepard, Black Men's Society
Gloria Austin, Urban League of Greater Hartford
Ken Brockman, Urban League of Greater Hartford
Carlos Toro, Latinos Contra SIDA
Juan Colon, Project Coordinator, Stowe Village-Hartford Housing Authority
Adaline Garcia, Community Educator, Plain Talk/Hablando Claro
William Ramos, Physician's Assistant-Burgdorf Health Center, City of Hartford
Reverend Thomas Goekler, Hispanic Ministry, St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church
Gwen Morgan, Youth Division – Hartford Housing Authority and Stowe Village Resident
Edwin Pacheco, Director, Hogar Crea

Section 4

Developing Resident Involvement and Leadership

Surplus Benefits: Strengthening Connections for Families and Neighborhoods

KEY POINTS

Individual growth and development is a key ingredient to a successful community program: build the program individual by individual.

Facilitate connections among staff and participants through informal sharing and celebrations of joint and personal accomplishments.

Integrate residents as employees, planners and advisors. This gives your program credibility and a stronger connection with the community. It also allows you to offer opportunities for professional development and to make a direct economic investment in the community.

Develop ways to link different sectors of the community – young and old, male and female, different ethnic groups. Work with residents to generate energy and commitment for improving youth life options.

A RESOURCE THAT WORKED IN NEW ORLEANS TO BUILD UNDERSTANDING AMONG PARTNERS

In New Orleans, "Undoing Racism" workshops became a key force in the program. This workshop gives a context to racism and encourages collective actions that contribute to an anti-racist society. Undoing Racism's approach is comprehensive, challenging people to look, not just at the apparent problems, but at their roots – daring them to see, not just the obvious, but the whole picture.

Through this workshop, participants are guided through a process that traces the origin of many social and health issues to historical phases. It offers them an opportunity to find solutions that may work. For example, the workshop helps people to identify "internalized oppression" – psychological barriers that keep them from developing themselves and becoming involved in the world. The idea is to help people identify and address their issues – an essential exercise that supports St. Thomas community members' ability to get in touch with their cultural roots, remove self-blame and shame, and refocus energies in a positive direction. Everyone involved with Plain Talk, including donors, trainers, technical assistance people and residents, is required to participate in a workshop.

Description

People of different ages, genders, ethnicities and backgrounds participated in Plain Talk and gained much from their experiences. In addition to the rewards of leadership, community members gained other intangible rewards for their involvement and hope for the young people's future. The process and dynamics of sharing their experiences, fears and hopes strengthened communities and empowered their members. These changes contributed to impact that went beyond the scope of the project. But how did Plain Talk create and nurture systems that supported or enhanced this process? There is no simple answer, but plenty of possibilities.

Personal growth is an added benefit of effective community involvement. It is also an essential ingredient in building community involvement and leadership. If the program really engages people and helps them connect with others and themselves, they will come to feel better about themselves, and have a greater sense of support and connection to families and youth in their neighborhood. As a part of the work process, make time for personal nurturing. Encouraging informal sharing and celebrations gives participants space and time to talk about personal things. Allow people to share their thoughts and feelings, even when the input doesn't directly relate to the program. The bonds staff and participants build with each other will sustain the energy of the program and increase its value to the whole community.

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One of the features of Plain Talk that sets it apart from other teen pregnancy prevention programs is its willingness to recognize – and, when possible, address – the needs of community members, even those needs that on the surface seem to go beyond the parameters of the program. However, when we examine the links between entrenched poverty and teen pregnancy, it becomes clear that factors such as unemployment must be addressed. Some of the community issues that Plain Talk sites recognized were immigration problems, unemployment, and changes in health care services and welfare eligibility. To address these issues, the sites did not shift their focus; instead, they developed a realistic neighborhood-based approach for dealing with teen pregnancy in the context of environmental factors. While it may not be possible, or even desirable, to shift the focus of your program toward another issue in the community, it is key not to ignore pressing issues that face the people you are working with. Use your community core group or other bodies in the community as a forum to address issues that affect people in your neighborhoods. Know what resources exist to help with different issues and help people link up with services. Consider links between the issue and existing or possible components of your program. For example, integrate job training and placement as a part of your male engagement component (see *Men-toring* chapter in Section 5 of this publication for a more detailed discussion of this example).

Offer something for every sector of the community – men, young people, elders, etc. There are two ways to do this: bringing them together and separating them out. Bring them together in a core group that will plan and oversee the project and hold community-wide events. Closer relationships between generations, genders and backgrounds form a bridge that brings people together. Elders can pass on history to youth, youth can explain what they are about. Misunderstandings can be cleared up. Alternatively, you may decide to provide specific services or programs to separate segments of the community, such as after-school or summer programs for youth, mentoring options for elders, education and discussion sessions for parents, rap sessions for men.

Plain Talk Hartford encourages men to become involved in addressing community issues

PHOTO BY LOUISE HARTFORD ©1997

ATLANTA'S INTEGRATED APPROACH

Linking the different components of their program contributed to Plain Talk Atlanta's ability to sustain involvement and build community. The project doesn't see any of the components as separate. Instead, they are all viewed as part of the whole picture that is Plain Talk.

Atlanta's coalition includes youth, elders, people who are active in the community, people who have never been active, parents, men and women. This didn't happen by coincidence; Plain Talk Atlanta invited all community members to consider being involved.

Outreach workers recruit community members for the *Askable Adults* workshop. People who complete this workshop can move on to the *Plain Talk Party Host* training; then, they host *Plain Talk Parties*. Workshop participants can later sponsor one youth for the *Summer Youth Institute*.

People can continue being involved by taking classes on topics such as stress management, participating in another *Askable Adult* workshop, or attending community events like the *Mechanicsville Reunion*. They can become more involved by participating in an *Outreach Worker* training or recruiting participants for the next *Askable Adult* workshop. It's a spiral that brings people closer to the center of the program, to each other and to their own potential.

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One of the key strategies for building a greater connection between Plain Talk and the community was to employ community members as lead staff. This strategy enhanced community-based leadership and provided a direct economic return to community members. Some sites had a goal. For example, they decided that four of the seven staff members had to be from the community. By hiring community members, the programs created new opportunities for individuals to develop skills they could market and use in future work. It also helped to clarify the program and its messages for more community members. The tightly knit communities that participated in Plain Talk were well served by having residents as staff. It was part of a strategy – build the capacity of participants, then (if possible) hire them.

Community building is not a step-by-step activity, but an ongoing process. It should be taking place continually, throughout the life of the program, and integrated into all aspects of the program. So, instead of including "Steps," here is a list of suggestions:

1. **Build and maintain awareness around your agenda for young people and families.** Let people in the community know that you are there, why you are there, what you are doing and how they can help. Keep the information between the community and your program flowing back and forth.

2. **Host community events.** Picnics, holiday parties, dances, potluck dinners and other community-wide celebrations reinforce the growing connection between people involved with your program and encourage all ages and groups to get involved.

EVENTS HOSTED BY PLAIN TALK IN NEW ORLEANS

- Block parties
- Holiday events like Valentine's Day parties (with the message, "It's alright to love, but protect yourself."), Thanksgiving Day gatherings (to thank volunteers and other participants or to thank residents for giving to their families by participating in the community), and Easter egg hunts
- Back-to-school celebrations that promote education

The project holds the activities regularly, but gives them a different twist each time.

3. **Create and support a sense of belonging.** Help participants to see that this is a group for them and remind them that their contributions are important. Keep the communication going through meetings and events. Let participants know that they are missed when they are unable to attend.

4. **Keep meetings consistent.** Schedule them at the same time and same place.

5. **Deal with the whole family.** Address community members as members of family units and acknowledge their families as central social systems. This can serve to strengthen families and help the program to be more relevant.

6. **Allow people to connect with each other on a personal level in all activities, gatherings and meetings.** Interacting with other community members allows people to know their neighbors, gain a sense of closeness and family, get support and caring from others and make new friends. And, best of all, it's fun.

"Plain Talk helped a lot of people, it got them stirred up and they went out and got jobs. Some of them have cars now; it's teaching them that they can be independent, they can go out on their own."

Stowe Village resident, Hartford

7. **Involve unlikely partners, such as the police, local businesses, churches, cultural arts centers and ethnic community groups.** Once again, this can be an opportunity for residents and other segments of the community to get to know each other and improve their relationship.

8. **Create subcommittees** so people have specific responsibilities and tasks (e.g., a theatre group, phone tree, health promoters).

9. **Share the experiences and realities of different generations.** The history of elders, the perspectives of youth and the realities of parents are examples of contributions that community members of different generations have to offer. Help participants to learn from each other and respect what everyone brings to the project.

"LITERACY MOMENT, PLEASE"

Plain Talk New Orleans incorporated into their process a way to ensure that communication was clear. When anyone got lost during a discussion or conversation, they asked for a "literacy moment." This request halted the discussion so that the person requesting it could get clarity on a term or concept. This was particularly helpful during intergenerational communication – elders sometimes referred to historical events that youth hadn't heard of, or youth occasionally used terms that middle-aged people didn't understand.

10. **Ensure community participation.** Make sure that the process of planning the program and designing the tools is truly participatory. The community is the "keeper of the plan." Share ownership (you may first need to build capacity so that the community can truly "own" its programs). Then, let them make the decisions. Affirm leadership. Use residents as resources. Groom people to assume leadership positions (e.g., facilitating meetings, acting as spokesperson for the programs).

11. **Encourage resident participation and ownership.** Get people involved in different community activities and in helping other community members – pick up other people's kids from school, support parents who are having a hard time. In New Orleans, the project rewards families that are involved in a variety of community activities with "Superlative Family" awards.

12. **Ask for help when you need it.** You may find yourself in a situation that you can't resolve alone – maybe a group cannot find consensus on a point, or some subset of the community feels that their needs are not being met. Don't see this as a failure and try to "sweep it under the rug." Find the resources (a mediator, a team-building specialist or a decision-making trainer) to improve things.

13. **Reinforce the message that everyone in the community is a role model** for someone else. Encourage people to serve as mentors for others.

14. **Give credit to those who developed the plan** – at the time and after. Acknowledge where the ideas and energy come from by presenting certificates of completion, appreciation, etc.

Trouble Shooting

- **Community members may come and go.** For different reasons, such as new jobs or educational opportunities, residents may need to limit their participation. People's lives can become stressful or overwhelming. Sometimes it becomes too difficult for individuals to maintain their involvement. Continue to reach out, even when people seem to be uninterested. Let people know that the project will welcome them back when their situations change.

- **As new leaders emerge, signs of jealousy and competition appear.** Change in leadership is a natural outcome of community development. Sometimes, this can feel threatening to those who are attached to the old social order and power structure. Deal with this issue openly; have people air their fears and experiences around the shifting leadership and power, and redirect energies toward common goals, shared needs and values.

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Section 5

Education and Skill Building

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Plain Talkers and Walkers: Spreading the Word Through Peer Education and Outreach

KEY POINTS

Peer educators and outreach workers are the face of your program. In many cases, they will be the only contact community members have with your program. Invest in them through training, skill development and ongoing supervision.

Develop mechanisms of engagement – interesting and informative events that serve more than one purpose (e.g., an activity providing social as well as educational information about an urgent health issue).

Description

Plain Talk is a way to disseminate clear, consistent and accurate messages to youth about sex and sexuality. The program is about:

- The messages young people get about sex and sexuality
- The messengers who deliver these messages
- Equipping the messengers with the information, skills and knowledge to convey clear and consistent messages

Plain Talk wanted its messages delivered in the most appropriate way possible. The sites chose peer education and outreach as a key strategy because they wanted to ensure that community members would hear culturally appropriate messages in a way that was acceptable. In each community, residents relied first on interpersonal channels for information and as a way to help them form opinions. Their peers were key to how they saw and experienced the world.

Peer education and outreach is a strategy that relies on trained people from the community to reach out to their neighbors, friends and families to pass along key messages and information. This is an ongoing activity. It isn't a campaign that is done once and forgotten about.

Typically, outreach workers know the basics about the program and support its efforts by recruiting community members for specific events. Peer educators, on the other hand, are trained on specific health issues and learn how to talk to people about them (e.g., in presentations or during one-on-one discussions). Outreach workers and peer educators are members of a specific target population who work with others from that same population (e.g., African American teens from a particular community reach out to youth with similar backgrounds).

Outreach workers often:

- Network with residents about community issues
- Invite community members to events (like presentations or block parties)
- Encourage community members to become involved (by agreeing to host a workshop series in their homes)
- Gather neighbors, family and friends to attend workshops
- Provide credibility and affirm the program.

Peer educators typically do all of the above. In addition, they:

- Organize meetings and educational sessions
- Make presentations on relevant topics
- Help to develop educational materials
- Organize community events
- Encourage at-risk individuals to get the information they need about health issues and related services
- Help coordinate focus groups or conduct surveys
- Teach their peers about topics like reproductive health and reducing sexual risk-taking
- Advocate and act as role models

However, peer educators are not health or sexuality educators. Professional resource people are used to address more sensitive and health-related issues.

INTEGRATION INTO THE BIGGER PROGRAM

In New Orleans, Walkers & Talkers are integrated into program implementation. They assist in the office by answering phones and getting mailings out, and they participate in weekly staff meetings. Staff meetings provide opportunities for the group to plan upcoming activities and to discuss all aspects of the program, including how to effectively engage people and how to recruit hosts for Home Health Parties. Occasionally, guest speakers make presentations on specific topics identified by group members, and the group practices skills – such as making presentations – that will help them do their jobs better.

Steps:

1. **Design a program to develop, disseminate and reinforce key messages.** Work with residents to develop specific tasks for educators and outreach workers. Create a training plan and develop an ongoing supervision and support system.

A MECHANISM FOR ENGAGEMENT – NEW ORLEANS' HOME HEALTH PARTIES

- **Hosts invite neighbors and family and provide food.**
- **Walkers & Talkers present information and invite participants to future Plain Talk events.**
- **Hosts receive a "safer sex kit" as a gift (which includes a project mug, T-shirt, condoms, information on AIDS and STDs and pamphlets on community resources).**
- **Participants fill out post-survey forms.**
- **Walkers & Talkers follow-up with a visit.**

2. **Convey respect and value by providing reasonable and appropriate compensation.** Determine what incentives/pay you will offer. Will you employ the educators as staff or offer supends? Will you pay them for their ongoing involvement or just for presentations or other specific activities? Will they be paid for their training and supervision? Incentives such as skill development and training can supplement or replace stipends in some situations.

3. **Hire a peer outreach coordinator, or include this role in a staff person's job description.** Check with resident stakeholders to develop a scope of work and selection criteria for this position. The role of an outreach coordinator is to keep volunteers plugged into the community, help them follow-up on activities, provide ongoing training, and give them a direct communicauon channel to and from the program.

4. **Recruit educators and outreach workers.** There are many ways to do this: ask community leaders to identify people, distribute flyers asking for volunteers, ask each volunteer to recruit others, hold a community meeting, go door to door giving information on the program and asking people to get involved. Then, hold a meeting in a comfortable place and offer refreshments. Discuss the program and how you would like them to become involved. Make the meeting fun; include games and door prizes, such as project T-shirts or hats. Tell them that other family members can get involved in the program and explain the different activities or components. Be clear about the next steps. Give participants something they can take away with them (e.g., written information on the program, contact information).

SELECTING OUTREACH WORKERS

Plain Talk San Diego took a careful and thoughtful approach to selecting residents to be promotoras. They developed specific criteria that guided the process. They wanted people who were:

- **Community members**
- **Leaders**
- **Experienced working in the community**
- **Open-minded**
- **Able to accept suggestions and constructive criticism**
- **Parents of adolescents**
- **Not afraid to speak in front of people**
- **Able to read and write**
- **Genuinely motivated to improve the health of their community**
- **Willing to work odd hours**

5. **Orient your peer educators and outreach workers.** Provide community mapping data, core messages, Plain Talk's mission and other background information. While an intensive training at the beginning is important, consider training to be an ongoing process. Take it very

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slowly so as not to overwhelm trainees with a lot of information. Use a structured training curriculum with good visual materials. Include skills training in making effective presentations, as well as information on reproductive health. Make sure that roles and responsibilities are well defined. Reinforce that they are role models for others in the community. As part of the training for your first group of peer educators and outreach workers, let them observe experienced health educators from the community conducting sessions. For later trainings, team the newer workers with experienced workers and have them work as a team on activities. Schedule regular (e.g., monthly) in-service or reinforcement training sessions.

NEW ORLEANS' ORIENTATION PLAN

When Plain Talk St. Thomas trained the first group of Walkers & Talkers, they invited possible participants to attend a retreat. The purpose of the retreat was to find out what they knew and didn't know about sex and sexuality and what issues were important to them.

Project staff then used information residents gave them during the retreat to develop materials for an in-depth workshop. This 12-session workshop (over 6 weeks, twice a week) included the following topics:

- Anatomy/physiology
- Family planning
- STDs
- HIV/AIDS
- Myths and taboos
- Facilitation
- Conflict resolution

Current peer education training covers the above mentioned topics and includes role plays and other opportunities to practice talking about teen pregnancy and presenting Plain Talk's messages. After the initial training sessions are complete, the newly trained Walkers & Talkers take the lead in a session called "practice what you preach." The goal of this session is to see if the participants are ready to go out as outreach workers (any who are not quite ready get more training in specific areas). Then, they are paired with skilled Walkers & Talkers and go out into the community.

6. **Prepare tools and resources** – support materials, clipboards, name tags, etc.

THE PLAIN TALK KIT – A TOOL FOR WALKERS & TALKERS

In New Orleans, trained peer educators receive a canvas bag with the project logo printed on it. The kit contains:

- Walker & Talker Manual – with project background information, peer education objectives, technical information on reproductive health, guidelines for Home Health Parties, samples of games and exercises for Parties, and contact information on community resources such as clinics and social service agencies
- Plain Talk information
- Community mapping data
- Core messages and program priorities
- Condoms
- A penis model (for demonstrating how to use condoms)

7. **Maintain the program.** Community educators and outreach workers need consistent support. Have regular debriefing meetings where staff, outreach workers and adult peer educators can check in with each other, identify areas of need and do project updates. Keep the office open to volunteers and ensure that the environment during meetings encourages discussion. Staff needs to be constantly aware of volunteers' capacity to do the work. Keep in mind that community outreach workers may never have worked in an office system and may need to be introduced to how things work. Try to do things in an organized manner (i.e., make appointments and set guidelines for picking up materials). Consider occasional retreats to reinforce project messages and to promote bonding and commitment. Conduct ongoing in-service trainings, including addressing other issues that are related to sex (e.g., first aid and domestic violence). Encourage and facilitate participation in conferences and other state and national training. Conduct periodic evaluations to assess educator/outreach worker strengths and weaknesses. Evaluate their knowledge of information, their ability to make effective presentations and facilitate discussions, and the changes they have experienced as a result of the program.

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SKILLS TO TAKE AWAY

Walkers & Talkers in New Orleans are provided with opportunities to gain and build on their skills in a variety of areas. These skills support their project responsibilities as well as possible future endeavors. They include:

- Computer skills
- Ability to communicate both orally and in writing
- Outreach skills (e.g., how to invite people to attend an event, how to handle rejection and how to help people find the resources they need)
- Job readiness skills (e.g., writing resumes, figuring out what they want to do)

Trouble Shooting

- **Peer educators are inadequately prepared for their roles.** Preparation, training, practice and support will help build the confidence and skills they need to work effectively with their neighbors and friends. Take the time to do this.

- **Quality control for information dissemination is difficult when transmitted through multiple voices.** Build in supports to reinforce central messages. Peer educators must absorb and master a lot of information to make a presentation or run a workshop. Always have a resource or support for peer educators or pair newly trained educators with more experienced ones. Even if this back-up person doesn't say a word, peer educators often feel more confident knowing that someone is there to support them or answer a difficult question.

- **Resource personnel inappropriately assert themselves as the experts or authority.** Clear guidelines about roles should be established early on, revisited frequently and updated as necessary.

- **Peer educators present their personal bias.** Training should be an ongoing part of your program. This will allow residents to master the information and to learn the art of objectivity.

- **Peer educators lose their commitment.** Even your best volunteers may move on. Remember that this could indicate success or failure – perhaps they are moving on to other ways to support the community. So, don't forget to thank departing participants for their work and make it clear that they are welcome back at any time.

Resources (located at the end of Section 5)

Plain Talk/Hablando Claro Adult Community Educator Curriculum Outline (Plain Talk Hartford) 5:1

Description and Goals of the Plain Talk Walkers & Talkers 5:2
Guidelines for Plain Talk Walkers & Talkers (Plain Talk New Orleans) 5:2

"Plain Talk hired people to come in and train us to do presentations. That was one of the climaxes of my life – when I accepted Plain Talk as a source of help. I remember a man named Carlos. He came out and told us he had HIV. I remember crying for half of the presentation. I started realizing how real things are... And either I try to do something to get out of it or I get caught up in it."

Melissa Billie, Stowe Village youth, Hartford

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Let's Talk: Preparing Adults to Speak about Teen Sexual Health

KEY POINTS

Involve parents and neighborhood adults in developing education and training materials. Find out as much as you can about what information and skills people have and what they want and need so that what you present will be relevant and interesting.

Encourage straightforward discussions about the reproductive health needs and concerns of sexually active youth.

It is not enough to focus on parents. Try to ensure that all adults in the community understand the issues and can communicate effectively with teens about sexuality and reproductive health.

Practice listening skills. Give the participants plenty of opportunities to practice discussing difficult and embarrassing issues in class. This will help them to listen and communicate better outside of class.

Description

Community mapping pointed out the need for education. In some sites, communication between adults and youth about sexual issues was not happening. In others, adults did not have the information they needed to communicate well. Often, adults did not believe that youth were as sexual as the youth reported they were.

Vecino a Vecino (Neighbor-to-Neighbor) workshops encourage adults to rethink how they view issues of sex and sexuality and to consider discussing these issues with youth.

PLAIN TALK FOR PARENTS – SEATTLE'S STRATEGY

Plain Talk for Parents is the basic tool used by Plain Talk White Center to address teen pregnancy. The four-part series of classes (held for one hour once a week for four weeks) is designed to help parents talk with their children about dating, sex, health, STDs, drug abuse and decision-making. The classes focus on improving the communication skills of parents and providing the information they need to reinforce these skills. The classes are interactive – offering plenty of time for questions and discussions. Resources like animated videos and cartoon print activity worksheets are used to stimulate discussions in class, and as tools parents can use with their children at home.

The classes are free for White Center residents, and at first, Plain Talk offered incentives, like gift certificates, to parents who completed the class. Plain Talk used community-organizing techniques to recruit participants. They contacted schools and formed links with PTAs, then used these links to help organize events. They met individually with principals, PTA heads, and with hundreds of teachers, health educators and school nurses in the school district. And the strategy worked. During 1995 and 1996, more than 300 people attended 18 Plain Talk for Parents courses and 133 graduated.

An independent evaluation of the training program showed that participants received helpful information and skills that they subsequently used in communicating with their children. They found the classes fun, interesting and informative; and their attitudes and behaviors changed –

Educating the community took many forms:

- Informal education through peer education and outreach (see *Plain Talkers & Walkers* in this section)
- Distributing messages through small media and community events (see *Getting the Word Out* in Section 6)
- Workshops and presentations for the community (the focus of this chapter)

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THE OTHER GENERATION – EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR YOUTH IN ATLANTA

In Atlanta, Plain Talk offers programs for youth as well as adults. The Summer Youth Training Institute was a big hit for teens (they got paid to participate) and for their parents (no more complaining from bored teenagers during the long summer days). An added plus was that the Institute became a recruitment vehicle for adult workshops and activities – more people in Mechanicsville became aware of and interested in the project through the summer program.

The program runs Mondays through Fridays, 1–5 p.m., for two months. Youth are paid $4-6 per hour (depending on their age) for the 20-hour work week. They get their checks every Friday. Plain Talk staff coordinate Institute programs, and three counselors work directly with the 35 teens (The level of effort required from staff to implement the summer program is the equivalent of more than one full-time position for five months).

Coordinators of Atlanta's program suggest that a summer program for youth include:

- One large project for each group (like a play) that youth work on throughout the summer
- Activities that build skills – saving money, handling a bank account, using a computer, becoming an entrepreneur
- Teen Speak-Out – an Oprah-like discussion forum that gives teens a chance to express themselves
- A leadership component – teens take turns being program leaders
- Community service – 20 hours should be expected over the project
- A creative project – have participants interview individuals in community agencies or businesses and then make a presentation to the group about that person
- Projects that are visible to the community and show that teenagers can contribute positively to the neighborhood (e.g., creating a community garden)

As part of a broader strategy to improve adult/adolescent communication, here are the steps that Atlanta staff took to implement the summer program:

1. Recruit and select participants – youth aged 10–18 split into age groups, not by gender. Set up an application process like a real job – youth fill out an application, are interviewed, etc.

2. Select participants according to established, set priorities – sponsored by an Askable Adult, live in targeted neighborhood, have been involved in other Plain Talk activities, etc.

3. Recruit and select counselors – look for people who not only have experience working with teens, but *like* working with teens, are self motivated, can work both independently and as part of a group, can be creative in programming and comfortable talking about sex and sexuality.

4. Orient staff the week before the program starts – the three-day orientation includes a review of all program materials and of the expectations for counselors (i.e., they need to arrive one hour before the participants to meet with staff and go over the day and any issues that come up).

5. Orient youth during the first day of the program and their parents during the first week – review policies with both groups and ask parents to get involved by chaperoning field trips, supporting the program's policies, etc.

6. Provide ongoing supervision and involvement with the teens and coordinators throughout the summer.

Atlanta's Summer Youth Institute offers youth a chance to earn money, learn about personal responsibility and have a lot of fun.

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Steps

1. **Assess needs.** Start by reviewing the results of your community mapping activities, focus group discussions, and other research conducted in your community. Conduct more research to fill in information gaps. A few focus groups can go a long way toward assessing needs. Find out things like:

   - What they already know
   - What they want to know
   - What they hope to be able to do as a result of the workshop
   - What types of activities would keep them interested
   - How long they would like the workshop to be

2. **Clarify objectives with residents and parents.** Determine the objectives for workshops and presentations. For example, you might want to:

   - Increase knowledge about reproductive health and related resources available in your community
   - Improve adult-youth communication in general
   - Ensure that consistent messages are getting out in the community – that youth are hearing the same thing from a variety of sources (protection and responsibility were key components of Plain Talk messages)
   - Build a network – ask community members to recommend adults and agencies that can talk to teenagers

AN EXPANSIVE CURRICULUM

Staff and volunteers in New Orleans believed that reproductive health information alone would not fill the needs of St. Thomas residents. They wanted to address, in a holistic way, the realities faced by the community. So, they worked together to develop a curriculum they called *Healing our Sexual Collective*. The curriculum begins with a discussion of how cultural/ethnic identity, racism and oppression affect the community. Other topics include: an Afrocentric worldview, child/adolescent development within a cultural context, sexuality within a cultural context, and conflict resolution within an Afrocentric framework.

Determine how best to meet your objectives. Your program might include any or all of the following:

- Short presentations on specific topics
- Regular, education sessions (i.e., once a month for six months)
- In-depth workshops (i.e., two times a week for four weeks)
- Public forum to raise awareness about local data
- Community rallies to celebrate successes

VECINO A VECINO: BECOMING "ASKABLE ADULTS" IN SAN DIEGO

Plain Talk San Diego developed an intensive workshop for adults that provided information on reproductive health and skills building in communication. The workshop is conducted in community members' homes and lasts 8 hours. Topics include:

- **Communication skills**
- **Human sexuality/anatomy and physiology**
- **Reproduction – pregnancy, menstruation**
- **Adolescents – physical and emotional development**
- **STDs and HIV**
- **Birth control**

3. **Collect and assess training materials to determine if they are appropriate.** Developing a curriculum or a set of training materials that are suited to your target population's needs and realities can be a time-intensive process. But the time and effort will be well worth it if you end up with a tool that is effective and appropriate.

   Start out by collecting existing materials on the topic you are covering; review them; and adapt them to meet your community's needs and information level (one Plain Talk site started with some effective HIV and STD prevention curricula and expanded it into a more comprehensive curriculum on sexuality). Present and discuss topics in a manner that takes the culture (i.e., African American, Latino or other) into account. Include a variety of training methods – guest speakers, videos, lectures, small group work – and always evaluate the workshop, either at the end of each day or at the end of the series (see *Getting the Word Out* chapter in Section 6 for more detailed discussion of the materials development process).

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SUGGESTIONS FROM HARTFORD

Here's a strategy that Plain Talk Hartford suggests for developing a curriculum:

1. Assess needs.
2. Develop an outline.
3. Set up small group discussions with people from the target population to get feedback on the outline.
4. Revise the outline as needed and use it to develop the curriculum.
5. Check the facts with reproductive health specialists.
5. Revise the curriculum based on what you learned.
6. Test your curriculum or training manual by holding a pilot workshop. Go through the entire workshop as it is intended to be led; get feedback from the group on overall length of the workshop and its specific sections, appropriateness and depth of information, and effectiveness of exercises; then, revise the curriculum based on what you learned.
7. Keep in mind that the process of curriculum development is ongoing. Information changes, as do the needs of prospective participants. A program needs to adapt to these changes.

4. **Recruit participants.** Plain Talk is a multifaceted program that reaches the community in a variety of ways. Peer educators can spread the word; flyers can be distributed by outreach workers or mailed to the program's mailing list; and people involved in other project components can be asked to tell their neighbors, family and friends.

Circulo de Hombres (Circle of Men) in San Diego reaches out to male community members in the places they frequent.

OUTREACH FOR ASKABLE ADULTS WORKSHOP

Plain Talk Atlanta takes a strategic approach to workshop recruitment:

1. Train five outreach workers (people who have already gone through the Askable Adults workshop).
2. Pay a stipend for outreach work.
3. Focus on targeted households the week prior to the workshop series; give each participant a list of 20 families whose teens may or may not have been involved in youth activities.
4. Charge outreach workers with getting 20 people to agree to come (if workers are successful and get a list of 100 people who say they will attend, typically 25 will show up for the workshop).
5. Secure childcare.
6. Find someone to coordinate refreshments.
7. Eat at 6:00, start the workshop at 6:30.

The project also came up with an innovative motivational strategy using incentives. The workshop is held two nights a week, Tuesdays and Thursdays, for four weeks. At the beginning of each Tuesday session, each participant receives a numbered ticket. At the end of that session, half of the numbers are called and each person holding one of the numbers (who is still in the room) wins a door prize ($1–2 gifts such as picture frames and kitchenware). At the end of Thursday's session, the remaining door prizes are given out. Additionally, there is a raffle for the grand prize drawing (one for each week). The same numbers given out on Tuesday are used; so to win, you had to have attended on Tuesday (to get a ticket) and be present at the drawing on Thursday (for the entire session). Grand prizes include items like microwaves, VCRs, TVs and boom boxes.

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5. **Prepare for the workshop.** If you use guest speakers, meet with them before the workshop to ensure that their messages are consistent with those of the program, and to help them incorporate local data and experiences so that their presentation is relevant. At the same time, go over what the series has covered to date and will cover in the future to give the speaker a context in which to work. Prepare materials – photocopy documents, gather equipment such as video players and dry erase boards – and get incentives and refreshments ready. (In Atlanta, each participant gets a folder containing handouts and a workbook, which includes a place for them to take notes from each session. The questions are then reviewed in class as a summary of the session.) To acknowledge participation and promote a sense of accomplishment, prepare certificates to hand out at the end of the workshop.

6. **Conduct the workshop.** At the beginning, ask participants what they want to get out of the workshop. Modify the curriculum to include relevant sessions as appropriate.

7. **Follow-up.** The workshop should be the beginning of involvement, not the end. Make sure that before participants leave, they know about other program activities and how they can fit in. Consider having a reunion of participants a few months after the session. Hold a more in-depth workshop on topics identified by the participants. Recruit them for training in outreach or other roles that would be useful. Put everyone on a mailing list and send out regular newsletters or flyers informing them of upcoming events.

DID THE WORKSHOP HAVE AN IMPACT?

Follow up with an evaluation (either a survey or interview) six months or so after the workshop. See if participants retained the information from the workshop. Find out not only if they are communicating with youth, but also what they are talking about. This should be part of a larger evaluation plan that is likely to include a pre-workshop survey (see *Monitoring and Evaluation* component in Section 1)

Resources (located at the end of Section 5)

Askable Adults Workshop Outline (from Plain Talk Atlanta) 5:3

General Guidelines for Youth and Reasons for Automatic Termination (from Summer Youth Leadership participant handbook, Plain Talk Atlanta) 5:4

Chris and Dana Meet at a Party (sample cartoon sheet from Plain Talk Seattle) 5:5

Plain Talk/Hablando Claro Evaluation (feedback form used by Plain Talk Hartford; workshop participants asked to fill it out at the end of the workshop) 5:6

PHOTO/ELIZABETH RAPPAPORT©1998

Community centers and schools provide resources for Plain Talk to hold events and activities.

Men-toring: Empowering Men to be Leaders and Role Models

KEY POINTS

Involving men in programs that focus on teen pregnancy prevention is essential to the success of the program and the unity and growth of the community.

Gaining the participation and support of boys and men may take creative, specifically targeted activities that use male interests and involve male leaders.

Decide whether a specific component targeting male involvement might help you reach your goals. Talk to people, especially male leaders, in the community, as well as individuals from other agencies who have worked on community-based projects in the neighborhood; figure out how you can effectively reach boys and men.

Offer something interesting. Include sports activities, community security activities, man-to-man support, and job training or employment opportunities in your program to attract men. After you provide them with something they need, it will be easier to reinforce the messages of your program through an informal approach.

Be persistent and creative. Try different approaches to engage men. Ask them about their interests and needs for services, then follow up on the ideas they suggest.

Description

Community problems and issues involve men and women equally. Take the issue of teen pregnancy for example – young men are as much a part of the problem, and potentially as much a part of the solution, as young women. Despite this fact, most programs focusing on pregnancy prevention fail to actively involve male members of the community.

Plain Talk sites had different experiences in this area. In Hartford, New Orleans and San Diego, project coordinators found that they needed separate components or entirely separate programs to successfully integrate men into their efforts. Plain Talk Atlanta and Seattle, on the other hand, were able to involve men in the general program.

PHOTO/ELIZABETH RAPAPORT©1998

Men play an integral role in spreading Plain Talk's messages in New Orleans.

INTEGRATING MEN – ATLANTA'S EXPERIENCE

When Plain Talk Atlanta started, organizers asked men (along with women) to join them. And men came. Not only that, they have been involved throughout the project.

The history of the community contributed to this success. In Mechanicsville, men had been watching women go through positive changes after being involved with the Center for Black Women's Wellness, the lead agency for Plain Talk Atlanta. And for several years, men wanted to get involved, too. Plain Talk provided the Center with a perfect opportunity for making this happen – and the men took advantage of it.

As it turned out, having men (as well as elders, young people, parents and other segments of the community) involved contributed to the project's overall impact. Plain Talkers in Atlanta believe that the project works because it functions like a family. They feel that much of the strength of their program comes from the combination of people working together on one goal. Men in the project AND in general gained much from this process.

The process of working together worked well for the men who were involved, and their contributions strengthened the project in general. The men who participated found it affirming to be included when they didn't often feel that they were a part of community activities. They felt embraced by the project, and this helped them join in the effort. They also gained a lot from working with women. As one man put it, "Women are more open and sensitive. They bring this way of being to the group and show men how to be more like that." Men also felt that the women they got to know through Plain Talk taught them to treat young women with more respect.

Men gave back to the project, too. They brought their perspectives to the table. They brought more reality to sex talk for boys. One community mentor explained, "Women aren't talking to their boys as clearly as to their girls. But men can do that."

The people who participated in Plain Talk Atlanta felt that separating men and women, or separating any other group from the others, would not have worked for them. They found balance to be crucial. While they acknowledged that there might be times when it would be useful to have some separate activities for men, Plain Talk Atlanta thrived on the blend.

So why have a separate program for men? Because sometimes it simply works better. Many programs have found that the strategies they used to recruit people for their efforts were not successful in reaching men in a meaningful way. This was true in several of the Plain Talk sites. Traditional social and health services have often excluded men, either explicitly or simply by not being comfortable for them to access. This is especially true in family planning and sexual health programs, which cater to women's health needs and often place the blame on boys and men. These historical factors have created a situation where men feel unwelcome or uninterested in getting involved in any program dealing with these issues.

Staff also found that the things motivating women to get involved – helping their community, learning to communicate better with their children, taking action to protect teens from pregnancy and disease – were not enough of an incentive to bring in men. Some of the men of these communities were dealing with serious issues – they couldn't find work, they didn't have a way to feed their families or pay child support, they felt invisible. In this context, it may not be feasible to expect men to be initially attracted to activities that directly address sexual health issues.

Plain Talk finds ways to address issues that community members face.

DESIGNING PROGRAMS FOR MEN – SAN DIEGO'S EXPERIENCE

When PlainTalk efforts began in San Diego, men in the Barrio Logan had not been actively recruited to participate in sexuality education programs. This and other information collected through the project eventually led to the creation of a new program for the men of Barrio Logan – Circulo de Hombres.

Circulo de Hombres is a male responsibility teen pregnancy prevention program. It's goal is to introduce positive male values and responsibility to teen and adult males in the community. Using the three P's (patience, presence and persistence), PlainTalk coordinators were able to recruit men and involve them in designing a relevant program.

Circulo de Hombres found their efforts to engage teen males to be more effective than those tried with adults. For the youth programs, they worked through local high schools and found them to be very receptive. And once the boys got a taste of what the program was about, they wanted to stay involved. The program now offers 11-week reproductive health workshops in schools and also holds regular meetings with a core group of male teens. Research with Hispanic youth showed that they need to feel better about themselves and to have positive role models. Therefore, the workshop curriculum focuses on self esteem, cultural identity and healthy relationships. At the end of the 11-week session, the youth head to the mountains for a retreat. This gives them a chance to talk and hike and also serves as a rite of passage, celebrating their participation in the program.

The program also sponsors male-only gatherings which include teens from the neighborhood and positive male role models from the greater community, such as "veteranos" (men who have been in prison and are now doing positive things in their communities). Since many of the people in Barrio Logan come from Mexico, Central and South America, Circulo de Hombres draws on Native American traditions to give form and meaning to the men's activities. For example, boys and men join together in a circle for a type of purification ritual that gives each person a chance to discuss his troubles and provides support and guidance to the others.

Components specifically designed for men and boys give them a chance to learn how to work together. With a group of their peers, they can identify problems, develop solutions and craft their roles. They can build ownership. In many communities, the financial and social burdens placed on men may mean that they have other priorities before they can focus on things such as pregnancy prevention. So, the programs they design may first address issues such as job training or community security, or ways to become visible in their neighborhoods (since men in many communities have lost their place and are not seen by social service agencies or even the community-at-large as contributing members of society).

GETTING JOBS IN NEW ORLEANS

PlainTalk New Orleans offers job support as a central aspect of its program for men. Black Men United for Change (BMUFC), the male engagement component of PlainTalk, develops strategies to address men's most pressing issue in St. Thomas. Part of this is helping them find jobs with livable wages and medical benefits. Their long-term goal is full employment for the men of St. Thomas.

For example, BMUFC approached several area employers, talked to them about the issues facing the people of St. Thomas, and explained that there were men in the community who were ready and willing to work. They asked the employers to give the men a chance, and about five agreed to hire a total of 30 men. BMUFC helped them find the right man for each job, but the employers made the final decision. BMUFC sent five men over for each opening and the employer decided who got each job.

On an individual level, men need a place to talk to about their issues. Men-only space may feel safer – it may help men to see that they aren't alone with their issues and to feel that they are supported and may even get help. Gender-separate space can help men work through their barriers.

Steps

1. **Assess the needs specific to boys and men.** Don't assume you know the problems, the issues or the culture. Include an analysis of the community from a male perspective – its services, leadership and history (the last point is important because, "you can't fix it until you know how it got broken").

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2. **Involve the community.** Ensure ownership among men and boys who are regarded as leaders.

3. **Recruit men** that community members look up to and pull them into the process. Hire staff from the community.

4. **Collaborate with other agencies** that have successfully engaged men and boys, and share resources. You will need to know where men can go for help with things like alcohol and drug counseling or specific health services.

5. **Develop your program.** Concentrate on a long-term program, since very little can be achieved in just a few sessions/workshops. Have participants decide on the components and/or activities. Find vehicles – like a football or basketball team, a prayer group or community security team – to engage men. Develop leadership. Get men to help with youth teams – sports or drill teams. Hold regular meetings and have a location where men can drop by, knowing that there will be someone there they can talk with. Focus on encouraging continued involvement – ways you can help men stay engaged in the program.

COMPONENTS OF ST. THOMAS MEN'S PROGRAM

Black Men United for Change (BMUFC) created programs to address the needs of the men in their community and to support the goal of building the capacity of men through self-determination. Their programs include:

- Job readiness skills
- Job referrals
- Drill team leaders
- Parent committees
- Athletic programs (football, etc.)
- Youth leadership development
- Peacekeepers
- Mentorship program
- Partnership in Freedom School

6. **Determine incentives.** It's often useful to have an attraction mechanism to get men to participate in events or meetings – offer door prizes, raffles and a meal or snack before you address issues. Be creative in determining longer-term incentives. This may not necessarily involve stipends; it could be nurturing a feeling that the men are needed. Other rewards might be putting men in leadership positions, inviting them to retreats or asking them to attend national events to represent the group.

7. **Find an area for each individual.** Be welcoming to everyone and help each man find something that he is interested in; help him fit in. When a person finds an identity in a program, that leads to personal power, which promotes ongoing involvement.

MEN AS "PEACEKEEPERS" IN NEW ORLEANS

BMUFC, Plain Talk New Orleans' male engagement component, set up the St. Thomas Peacekeepers, an unarmed community peacekeeping team that addresses community safety and security issues.

Tips for Men's Programs

- **Offer people something** – job training, leadership training.
- **Don't set yourself up like a social service agency.** Don't do for people, instead help them to do for themselves; help them become their own advocate. Don't create a crutch; ask residents to give something back.
- **Don't promise things you can't provide.** Be clear about what you will and won't do. Tell them up front "I'm not here to offer you a pipe dream, but I'm going to be here. I've been through this myself; we are in this together."
- **Be visible.** Set up an office in the community and have people there so that men can walk in and see someone.
- Be willing to **address individual issues** as well as collective ones.
- **Develop leadership opportunities.** Offer a way to gain power. Participants should drive the structure. Also, encourage involvement on boards of other agencies and community groups – resident councils, city- and community-wide bodies. They will see that their input is important and go on to other things.

- **Don't get discouraged.** Remember that change comes gradually.

- **Encourage confidentiality.** Establish rules for the group which ensure that men can feel safe talking about personal issues.

- **Reinforce that men are role models.** Kids and others from the community are watching. You are doing this for them as well as for yourself.

- **Be sensitive to community needs.**

- **Hire male staff** or recruit male volunteers to run the program.

- **Train or sensitize all staff** to issues of working with men of different ages.

- **Use mentors and role models** – men who are slightly older than your target population can be particularly effective.

- **Develop a peer outreach component** (see Section 6, *Plain Talkers and Walkers: Spreading the Word through Peer Outreach*).

- **Use positive messages** – "Be proud, be responsible." Make sure that your program messages affirm the value of men.

- **Be flexible** – set schedules to accommodate their needs (this may require arranging activities after business hours).

- **Provide training** – as their roles become clear ask them what they want to learn.

Trouble Shooting

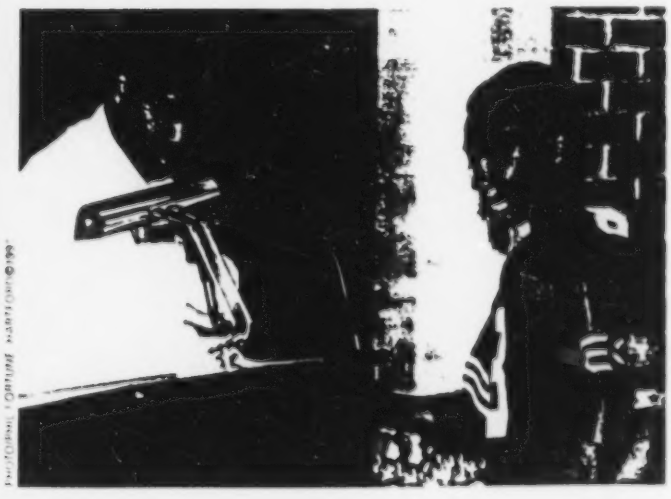
- **Recruiting men is a novelty and likely to be a challenge.** Rely on men to be the experts on the needs and interests of men. Search for activities that men enjoy, then integrate program components into those activities. When one idea doesn't seem to be working, ask men from the community for more ideas and try those.

- **Dealing with multiple priorities and the potential for burnout.** Staff and volunteers may find that it is not only hard to get men involved, but to keep them involved. Support those working on men's programs and find ways to encourage them to keep going. Don't give up. Let them come back even if they stray four or five times.

- **Dividing rather than uniting.** The purpose of creating male-specific activities and groups is to maximize the participation of boys and men in your program, not to divide men and women or polarize the community. Remember to keep all activities, male and female, focusing on the good of the whole community. Avoid an "us and them" mentality. Arrange for envoys from the men's groups to speak with the women's groups, and vice versa.

Resources

Male Reproductive Health Education Table of Contents (Plain Talk San Diego) 5:7



Youth are rewarded for their hard work and accomplishments.

Plain Talk/Hablando Claro
Adult Community Educator Curriculum
Outline

Session One – Self Esteem

Assessment of our individual and collective self perception

Session Two – Self Esteem

Examination of how our self esteem affects our relationships with others

Session Three – Caretakers * Taking care of ourselves

An examination of how, as parents, we often neglect our health and well being
Presentation and discussion about self care, self love and modeling behavior for children and adults in our community

Session Four – The many aspects and meanings of sexuality

Exploration of the meanings of sex and sexuality in our individual lives and in the lives of others; including heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, the effects of religion, the media, culture, peers and other society factors

Discussion of how self esteem affects our sexual attitudes and decisions

Session Five – Refusal and Negotiation Skills

Exploration of why we do things that we know will harm us

Refusal and Negotiation Methods Practice – Role Plays

Session Six – HIV, STDs and Drugs

Presentation of facts, clarification of myths

* *Guests* - Panel of People with AIDS/HIV, including recovering addicts

Session Seven – Getting your message across I

Parties, videos and other effective methods for reaching adults

Session Eight – Getting your message across II

Small groups will brainstorm and begin planning effective group presentations and activities

Media Workshops (Dates to be determined)

DESCRIPTION AND GOALS OF THE PLAIN TALK WALKERS & TALKERS

Goal:
The goal of having St. Thomas community leaders serve as Walkers & Talkers is to assist families with youth who are or may become sexually active with factual information, culturally sensitive community support and information about community resources. Ultimately Plain Talk wants to assist adults and youth in St. Thomas to become more comfortable in addressing adolescent sexuality issues so that our young people will know that they have the support and resources needed to protect themselves.

Walkers & Talkers Training:
Each Walker & Talker has been given approximately 50 hours of intense training which includes the following:

- History and philosophy of the St. Thomas/Irish Channel Consortium (STICC) and the St. Thomas Resident Council (STRC)
- Understanding adolescent sexuality through a historical socio-cultural analysis
- Understanding your own sexual values
- Facts about reproductive anatomy and physiology, contraception, adolescent sexuality, and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS
- Child Abuse
- Facilitation Skills
- Community Outreach Skills

GUIDELINES FOR PLAIN TALK WALKERS & TALKERS
PLEASE READ!

PLEASE take a few minutes to read these guidelines. Community leadership is the backbone of our project. Without you, we could not get the job done. We all need to agree on the guidelines and know what we expect of each other. Here are the expectations we have:

1. **CONFIDENTIALITY:** Plain Talk has a confidentiality policy that we strictly uphold. It is imperative that Residents' information be held in the strictest of confidence.

2. **COMMITMENT:** Plain Talk asks each walker/talker to commit to a minimum of one year.

3. **DEPENDABILITY:** Plain Talk counts on walkers/talkers to be available when they have agreed to be there. When you have signed up for a home health party or other event, you need to be there. If you can not make it, you need to contact the appropriate person (Plain Talk Coordinator of Community Organizer) as soon as you find out.

4. **FEEDBACK:** We want to hear from you to get feedback on your experiences as a walker/talker – what went well, what was difficult, what could have gone better, suggestions you have for improvements, and how we are doing on our end of this agreement.

WE ARE GRATEFUL!! THANK YOU!!

Askable Parent/Adult Workshop
Workshop Outline

Week One		
3/31/98	**Tuesday**	Introduction to Workshop
4/2/98	**Thursday**	Adolescent Growth and Development
Week Two		
4/7/98	**Tuesday**	Teen Pregnancy: It's No Secret
4/9/98	**Thursday**	Birth Control Methods & Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDS)
Week Three		
4/14/98	**Tuesday**	Listen so They Will Talk/Talk so They Will Listen
4/16/98	**Thursday**	Raising Healthy Kids: Families Talk About Sexual Health
Week Four		
4/21/98	**Tuesday**	Raising Responsible and Caring Teens & Family Connections The Meeting
4/23/98	**Thursday**	Wrap-up & Closing Celebration

All sessions will be from 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM with refreshments/social time from 6:00 – 6:15.

General Guidelines For Youth

This is a paid training program. Therefore, youth will be treated, and expected to act, like employees. Youth are expected to do the following:

- Arrive to work promptly at 1 p.m. Time will be kept at 15 minute intervals. If you report to work past 1:15 p.m. (for example, 1:16 p.m.) your timesheet will reflect that you came to work at 1:30 p.m.
- Youth must sign in and out every day. The sign-in sheets are kept with each child's counselor.
- If a youth will be late or can't make it to work, it is their responsibility to contact the office as early as possible. Please call (404) 688-9202 and speak to Jemea Smith or Watrina Watson.
- Respect authority figures. Youth will be under the direct supervision of a counselor. It is important that all youth show respect and courtesy for their counselors, staff persons, staff at the Dunbar Center, security guards, workshop presenters, etc.
- Respect and cooperate with the other youth/co-workers.

Reasons for Automatic Termination

Youth must abide by the *same* office procedures as the employees of the Center for Black Women's Wellness. Automatic termination will occur for the following:

- falsification of attendance sheets
- possession of firearms, explosives or weapons
- the use and/or sale of illegal drugs in any form
- deliberate misuse, destruction or damaging of work site property or property of others
- fighting

Chris and Dana meet at the party

In this situation, Chris and Dana have met at a party. They have been sitting at the kitchen table for hours talking and drinking. This is the first time they have spent time alone together and they both really like each other. The night is getting late. What are they both thinking and saying?

- Write their thoughts in the "thinking bubbles" and their dialogue in the "speaking bubbles."
- After the thinking and speaking bubbles are filled, ask the following questions:

  What are they thinking? Why are they thinking such thoughts?

  How are their thoughts different from one another?

  How are they the same?

  What are they saying? Why are they saying such things?

  How are their statements different from one another?

  How are they the same?

  What is the difference between what they think and what they say?

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PLAIN TALK/HABLANDO CLARO
EVALUATION

Date:

Educator/Speaker:

1. Could you tell us what was the one thing that you learned in this session that impacted you the most?

2. Was there anything that did not apply to you or was not interesting?

3. Tell us what you would change about this class/session/training:

4. Tell us what you would keep the same about this class/session/training:

5. Were there any concerns or problems that you personally had in regards to this class/session? (Example: food, location, staff, materials, attitudes)

6. What is your overall opinion of this class/session?

Male Reproductive Health Program
Table of Contents

SESSION 1

Introduction/Welcome
- Ice Breaker
- Overview of Program
- Pretest

SESSION 2

Self Identity
- Definition of Self
- Values
- Hygiene

SESSION 3

Family Roles & Support Systems
- Role of Male/Father
- Role of Female/Mother
- Extended Family
- Family Dynamics

SESSION 4

Peer Relationships
- Developing Meaningful Relationships
- Defining Relationships
- Sense of Belonging/"Fitting In"

SESSION 5

Effective Expression
- Communication Skills
- Effective/Non-effective
- Listening Skills
- Conflict Resolution

SESSION 6

Goal Setting
- Outlook for the Future
- Education
  - Career Development
    - Realistic Goals/Career Options
    - Career Plan

SESSION 7

Career Development
- Career Plan
- Technology
- Finances
- Executive Leadership

SESSION 8

Human Sexuality
- Sexuality Issues
- Gender Roles
- Affect (Emotional Involvement)

SESSION 9

Abstinence and Contraceptive Methods
- STDs
- Abstinence as a Choice
- Contraceptive Methods
- Teen Pregnancy

SESSION 10

The Parenting Process
- Definition of Parenting
- Realistic Thinking
- Parenting Responsibilities

SESSION 11

Substance Abuse and Violence
- Drugs of Choice
- Violence and Drug Use
- Ramifications
  - Legal, Physical, etc.

SESSION 12

Divorce, Suicide, Death and Bereavement
- Mortality vs. Immortality
- 5 Stages of Death

SESSION 13

Closing Session/Graduation
(Rite of Passage)

Section 6

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Reinforcing Key Messages

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Saying What We Mean: Developing Messages

One community member involved with Plain Talk described the program as "the process through which the messages can get out." This reflects how important messages are to a community-based program – particularly one that aims to affect behavior and attitudes. This section describes the program components most directly related to messages. The first chapter in the section, "Saying What We Mean," relates to how Plain Talk's core and supporting messages were developed. The second, "Getting the Word Out," focuses on tools and products that help get the messages out.

KEY POINTS

Develop clear and persuasive messages. Simple messages that pass on one point are likely to stay with people longer and even impact their behavior.

Ensure that the messages are acceptable and *liked* by the community. The best way to do this is to have the community develop them.

Description

Message development is about finding clear, powerful and concise ideas that capture the essence of the program. In a health promotion program, the messages tend to be persuasive in nature – they try to encourage people to take some action or consider some idea related to improving their health.

MESSAGES OF SELF-DETERMINATION

The messages of Plain Talk New Orleans are clear, concise and relevant, and are based on the principle of self-determination. They first emphasize that people can control their lives. Then, they mention the dangers of unprotected sex, emphasizing that unprotected sex is not socially acceptable.

The messages say things like "You have a whole life in front of you, take time, be patient," "Girls don't get pregnant by themselves, guys have a lot to do with that," and "If you use condoms right, they will work and feel okay."

Messages should be technically accurate as well as culturally and linguistically sensitive. The best messages are written in the words of the people they are intended to reach. To ensure that messages get through to the community, have the community develop them. A message developed in this way is likely to be better understood and more persuasive. It will also be more easily integrated into the community and last longer. People will like it, so they will pass it on, wear it on a T-shirt, etc.

Steps

1. **Get community residents involved.** Use your resident board or create a specific working group of community members to develop the messages. Review community mapping results and program objectives and discuss what messages you want to pass on. In this way, the messages will be created through dialogue.

MESSAGES AS A RESULT OF COMMUNITY DIALOGUE – ATLANTA'S EXPERIENCE

Creating core messages may not come overnight; they are more likely to emerge over time from continuous group discussions with residents. Documentation of these meetings will lead you to relevant messages. When messages are developed separate from the work, they become commercial, false. Atlanta's resident board first focused on clarifying and agreeing to the core beliefs for the project. They came up with "acknowledging sexually active youth" as the main belief. Others were: "Plain Talk is about males, too," "fostering open communication between young people and adults," "provision and access to the best services for young people to receive contraceptive and protective services," and "providing information and building skills capacity to help youth make responsible sexual decisions." From these beliefs, Atlanta came up with "helping our sexually active teens respect and protect themselves" as their core message.

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2. **Determine the intent of the messages** – what you want to communicate to the target audience. Do you want messages that attract attention, motivate, deliver information or make an action easy? Do you want them to celebrate families or encourage communication with youth?

3. **Consider the approach that will work best.**
   - What *tone* is likely to have the strongest impact – humorous or serious, emotional or rational? Should it appeal to people as individuals or to them as members of a family or community? Should it be uplifting or simply positive?
   - What *style* should the message embody – modern or traditional, formal or down-home?
   - What *point of view* are the messages speaking from – teens or parents or others?

4. **Come up with specific messages.** Develop messages that are simple, so that all community members easily understand them. Plain Talk sites found that having one or two core messages, then several other supporting messages, worked best.

PLAIN TALK MESSAGES

It's Just A Conversation
Healing Our Sexual Collective
It Takes a Whole Village to Raise a Child
Ain't No Party Like a Plain Talk Party
An Ounce of Prevention Is Worth a Pound of Cure
Communication is the Key
It's Never Too Early, It's Never Too Late

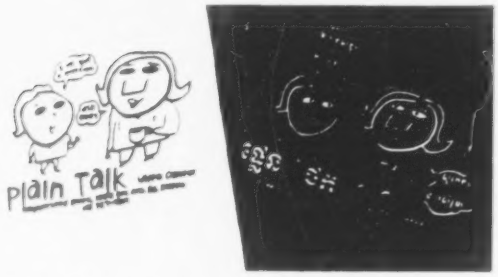
5. **Make sure they are technically correct.** If your messages are about reproductive health, have a reproductive health specialist (maybe someone in your service provider group) review the content to ensure that they are technically accurate.

6. **Test them with the community.** Find out what people think and how they feel about the messages. Are they understood the way you intended them to be? Is there a better way to say what you want to say? Are there better words for key terms – slangs or idioms that are more acceptable?

7. **Revise as necessary.** And continue revising until the people you want to reach are getting the messages you want delivered.

8. **Determine how you will deliver the messages** to your audience and beyond. Come up with a distribution strategy. The most important thing is to integrate the messages into all aspects of the program. So, the strategy might not be independent of the activities, but an integral part of those activities. For example, you might:
   - Ask peer educators to pass them along orally
   - Print the messages on T-shirts and bags and give them out to the community
   - Sponsor community events to launch the messages
   - Hold a special meeting with service providers who serve the community; present your messages; and ask the providers to reinforce the messages in their work

Think about creating a vehicle, or multiple vehicles, for the messages that will outlive the program (The next chapter of this section goes into more detail on one strategy – creating educational tools and products).



Plain Talk Seattle created a logo that they used in a variety of ways, such as T-shirts.

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Getting the Word Out: Creating Educational Tools and Products

KEY POINTS

Get it right, then share it with others. Information and tools need first to be carefully developed, then tested to ensure that they are accomplishing what they are intended to accomplish. When you are confident that you have something worth sharing, get it out.

Don't reinvent the wheel. You can save valuable time and resources by looking at tools that other programs have used successfully. Review them against what you know of your community and decide if you can adapt them.

Description

Once you have some clear messages and/or a program that has been successful; think of ways to get this information out. There are the program messages, such as "It's Just a Conversation...", that support your goals by encouraging community members to change their behavior. There are also more general messages, such as "communities need to be involved in programs targeting their members," that share your approach with others.

Messages can be delivered in a variety of ways, from face-to-face interaction such as outreach activities to targeted media campaigns, using posters, T-shirts or even radio. In all your efforts, be systematic, and consider who you are trying to reach. There are two general audiences – the people living within the community and those from outside the community.

"I have come to understand that sexuality is a part of being human. I have learned how to answer difficult questions that my kids and the community may ask."

Maria Miramontes, Barrio Logan resident, San Diego

PLAIN TALK SEATTLE SHARES WHAT THEY LEARNED

Plain Talk for Parents is the basic tool used by the White Center project to address the issue of teenage pregnancy. The four-part series of classes helps parents talk with their children about dating, sex, health, STDs, drug abuse and decision-making. It also encourages parents to become community organizers – helping them to become effective advocates for change in their community. As one person put it, it is "one-half communication training and one-half community organizing." It encourages parents to talk about the current status of health services. And it offers tools they can use to ensure that the necessary changes happen. They learn how to speak out at community meetings, how to write letters to county council members, how to find the place to take their concerns.

This focus on community organizing and supporting social change is what led the project to develop another product, the *Plain Talk Training Institute*. "The Training Institute is about giving Plain Talk to the community," explained Dominic Cappello, who wrote the material.

The *Training Institute* is a training-of-trainers workshop designed to share the lessons learned in White Center. This one- or two-day workshop and the accompanying materials are for people who are committed to community health or interested in helping parents improve their communication skills with their children. Participants have included parents, teachers, school principals, PTA officials, representatives from state and national education associations, and health educators.

The workshop is designed to help communities create their own communication skills programs, like *Plain Talk for Parents*. The Training Package includes a 200-page trainer's manual, a video, a community organizer's planning guide, four Patty Plain Talk cartoons, communication skill-building activity sheets, and tools to help them set up the class series in their area.

To make sure that different segments of communities can be served, Plain Talk Seattle translated *Plain Talk for Parents* handouts and overheads into Cambodian, Spanish and Vietnamese. These translations, like the *Training Institute* and its materials, are available to other communities.

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Getting Messages Out in the Community

Delivering a consistent message to members of the community strengthens a program. For Plain Talk, it was important to ensure that both teens and adults heard the same messages.

There are many ways to get messages out in a community. Several Plain Talk sites used peer educators and resident board members to get their messages out orally during strategic outreach efforts. Others sponsored regular community events, such as bingo, card game tournaments, and festivals, to reinforce messages. Messages were spread through education seminars (such as Hartford's Health Concern Meetings which offer information on topics that the community identifies) and presentations made during community events hosted by other agencies. The project supported their presentations by passing out take-away materials such as brochures, calendar cards and wallet cards.

Plain Talk did not have a budget that supported a large-scale media campaign. The sites, however, were able to use a variety of channels in an effort to saturate the community with relevant messages. Plain Talk's media campaigns were targeted, small-scale efforts that included useful items like T-shirts and mugs; bus posters and bus shelter ads, talk radio shows, bumper stickers, and information packets. The information packets included project brochures and invitations to events, information about community resources such as clinics, condoms, etc. They were sent to "distribution stations" such as neighborhood stores, community centers, and libraries, where residents could pick them up if they wanted.

Getting Messages Out Beyond the Community

Use your connections and partnerships with other agencies to get your messages out. But do not begin sharing the messages until you are sure that they are clear and that other local agencies understand and accept what you are doing. (See *Reaching Out*, in Section 3.)

Hold an open house and invite service providers and staff from other agencies that serve the community. Participate in health and community fairs outside the community. Join in city or issue marches or rallies. Distribute printed materials as part of each of these events.

Encourage your local libraries to make brochures and resource lists on health topics available to their patrons. One site was successful in convincing their library to develop a guide to finding sexuality-related materials.

Steps

1. **Determine your needs** for tools and resources. What education materials does your program need? How can you disseminate the messages throughout the community? Forget about large-scale mass media. It is very expensive and not cost-effective for a program that focuses on a specific neighborhood. If there are local radio or television talk shows that you know your community listens to, ask to be a guest. This is free. Some teens in Hartford hosted their own radio show on a community station. Use promotional items (also called collateral materials) such as key chains, T-shirts or magnets to reinforce messages; paint wall murals; or perform street theatre.

   A project newsletter can be an effective tool. This can serve a marketing and advocacy function to strengthen your connection with other agencies (e.g., local, regional and national organizations). Provide information on trends and statistics and keep people up-to-date on project activities.

2. **Develop or acquire materials.** Before developing any materials, see what exists already. What are local agencies passing out for information? Are any of these materials appropriate for your needs and your audience? Are they simple and accurate? Use, adapt or create – in that order.

ADAPTING EFFECTIVE MATERIALS FOR A DIFFERENT AUDIENCE

Plain Talk New Orleans started out by reviewing materials used by the local Planned Parenthood office. Staff then adapted these pamphlets and flyers to the culture of St. Thomas and to the needs of community members. The new materials included a more open discussion about sexuality. This strategy saved the program a lot of money – money they could use for other needed activities.

3. **Ensure that materials are relevant and acceptable.** As part of the development process, ask community members what they think of the materials. Revise as necessary. Also, after specific materials have been out in the community for a year or so, check them again with the community. Are they still relevant? How can they be improved? Paying the extra money to improve materials is better than continuing to use less-than-adequate ones.

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4. **Produce the materials.** Ask community members that are involved with the project if they know of appropriate people who might be willing to donate their time to help. If you want to do street theatre, you could use the support of someone who is a member of a troupe. If you are doing print materials, you could use a graphic designer. Contact local printing/photocopying companies and ask if they would be willing to produce your materials for free or at a reduced price. Ask your partners if they can help get materials produced at a low cost. They may be willing to cover some costs or share their facilities or contacts.

5. **Disseminate the goods.** Once you have produced materials, make sure that they get out. Develop strategies that ensure that materials are used as they were intended. If you produced a wallet card with the hours and services of teen health clinics, make sure that they get into the hands of youth. If you created a list of community resources, make sure that outreach workers have copies so they can share the information with residents. Create a system for keeping track of quantities so that you can reprint as needed.

More on Developing Training Curriculum

Programs that include education efforts will need curricula to guide the trainers. As you did when you produced other materials, see what already exists. If you find something that is relevant, adapt it to the particular needs of those who will participate in the workshops or education sessions.

Ensure that the curriculum is lively and interactive. Be open to using things from the environment as educational tools – show a provocative video and facilitate a discussion about the issues it raises, play a popular song and have small groups interpret its meaning, ask trainees to work in groups to develop a story-line about teen sexuality for a current television show. Bring in new things to use. Use a variety of training materials to reach people who respond to different types of information. Include:

- Charts
- Books
- Magazines
- Pictures
- Role plays
- Games

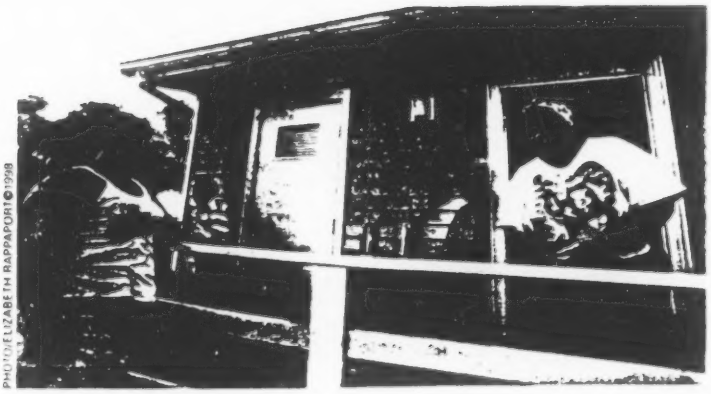
Resources

Excerpt from Plain Talk Seattle Newsletter 6:1

Plain Talk Training Package Order Form inside!

the PLAIN TALKER

Plain Talk Forum was a huge success


PHOTO/ELIZABETH RAPPAPORT©1998

Plain Talk celebrates cultural understanding and acceptance.

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the PLAIN TALKER

STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTING TEEN PREGNANCY, HIV, AND STDS **SUMMER 1998**

Plain Talk: Connecting youth to parents and program to community

By Julia Loren
Plain Talk Training Coordinator

Several events at Plain Talk Seattle have caused us to reflect on certain lessons learned, lessons which will be presented at our second Plain Talk Training Institute on September 18-19.

The first event occurred when Sharon Brew, Program Coordinator of PATH (Partners in Action for Teen Health - a Carraera/Dempsey program), approached Neighborhood House about housing her program, counseling staff, computer lab, and all 30+ kids. She had exhausted all resources and the program had outgrown its stay at the local elementary school. No one in the community would give them shelter, citing reasons such as: "the kids are too loud"; "it's too frightening to have a group of teens on their property"; "we're afraid things will be destroyed"; "we don't want a mess." So the PATH kids moved into the building where the Plain Talk offices are located. Now every day after 3 pm the halls are alive with the voices of youth. And we are listening. We are also presenting Plain Talk workshops to the parents of these teens, helping to strengthen the bond of communication in their families and addressing issues of sexuality and relationships.

What did we learn? Sometimes collaborations and partnerships get a little closer than anticipated, yet the payoff comes in staying connected to youth and listening more intently to their world view. There are hidden benefits to many partnerships and collaborations which may not always seem comfortable or cost-effective.

The second event came in the guise of two recent Plain Talk for Parents and Teens workshops. Parents noted their concern for youth and the teens noted their communication problems with parents. Opening up communication is the first step in the work of encouraging parents to take the lead in talking with their teens about sex and violence. And what did teens hear from their parents? The usual safety concerns. As for the parents, they heard about how their responses can shut down communication with their teens and how to keep the doors of communication open. One young woman said, "When my mom wants to talk to me I have to listen right then. But when I want to talk to her I have to wait."

What did we learn? Community collaborations such as the excellent working relationship Plain Talk has developed with the local teen health clinic and Highline Community Hospital pay off in building trust and visibility for the program in the area. Partnerships and collaborations take time to build and may become a source of financial assistance to your program.

The Seattle Plain Talk
Training Institute
Friday, September 18, 9 am – 3 pm
Saturday, September 19, 9 am – 4 pm
SeaTac Holiday Inn, Seattle, WA

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Plain Talk News

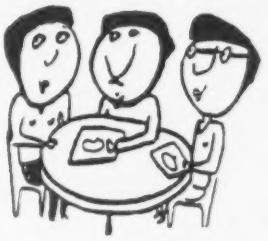
from Seattle

Plain Talk in Spanish

Que bueno! Plain Talk is being translated into Spanish. While we translate materials in preparation for our Training Institute, Olga Medina, Latino Affairs Director for the Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health, is soliciting funding to translate our entire training package into Spanish. One of her target schools is largely Latino, with many first generation immigrants facing huge communication and cultural challenges. We're hoping to lure Olga out west to present a workshop for the Training Institute so she can relate the lessons she has learned in presenting Plain Talk to Latino families.

We at Plain Talk also would be interested in information that trainers from other agencies can share about presenting communication and sexuality education to Latino parents. Please call Julia Loren, Training Coordinator at Plain Talk with any stories you can share as we seek to extend Plain Talk into the Latino community.

"Train the Trainers" Institute is set for September 18–19



Plain Talk Seattle will offer it's second "Train the Trainers" Institute on September 18-19 at the Holiday Inn by SeaTac airport in Seattle. On Friday, September 18, the Institute will hold a special day of training on using the Plain Talk for Parents curriculum. Julia Loren, Plain Talk Training Coordinator, and Mary Bryan, Highline School District Health and Sexuality educator, not only will present the model but will train others how to adapt the model to different groups. Barbara Huberman, National Training Director of Advocates for Youth will offer her expertise in adolescent sexuality and train other on presenting sexuality education to adolescents and parents. This first day of the Training Institute will be suitable for those who are already using the Plain Talk curriculum but desire more training. Those who would like to work on presentation skills and focus specifically on sexuality education will also find this an invaluable day of training.

On Saturday, September 19, the second day of the Training Institute will focus on "Connectedness" - connecting parents and children, and connecting Plain Talk with communities. Strategizing on collaborative approaches to presenting parent education and sexuality education within communities will be the focus, as a panel of community collaboration members who helped launch Plain Talk look at insights gained over the last few years in the demonstration site area of the original Annie E. Casey Initiative. Topics will include using collaborations to secure a funding base, glimpsing the big picture of comprehensive services, linking programs like Plain Talk to advocacy, and lessons learned in presenting Plain Talk to diverse communities. Breakout workshops will include: presenting Plain Talk for Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Latino families; using evaluations and collaborations for securing funding of Plain Talk; and adapting Plain Talk for Parents and Teens.

Those attending the Institute will be given Training Packages, including supplemental translations in Spanish, Cambodian, and Vietnamese, as well as a supplemental manual addressing challenges and solutions facing trainers. Last year's Institute rolled out the new Training Manual and Video created by Dominic Cappello, and presented the model to those who were interested in using it in their schools, agencies, and communities. We've listened and learned a lot in the last year of working intensively with the Plain Talk curriculum in a variety of situations. Join us as we seek to pass along the information to you.

Youth Health Clinic Update

Curious what teens are saying about their health care needs? Julie Beecher, ARNP, a key staff member at the new school-linked Youth Health Center, recently enlightened us. In just five months the Youth Health Center has averaged 100 visits per month with over 500 teens aged 13-19 stopping in for primary health care, STD screenings, and pregnancy tests. Half of the visits are for reproductive health care, according to Beecher. "A number of them don't want to have sex and are telling us that they don't know how to say NO," she explained.

Beecher spends about 30 minutes or more with each teen, sometime talking about health issues, at other times talking about refusal skills, truancy, and relationship issues before referring them to the staff counselors. About 80% of the teens seeking help at the YHC have mental health issues focusing on depression and anxiety, as well as school issues such as failing or parental pressure to obtain a consistent 4.0 grade point average. The YHC also offers parenting classes and a resource center in a comprehensive effort to support teen health and wellbeing.

"Eating disorders and weight concerns are big issues right now," Beecher said. "A lot of middle school girls are really worried about their weight." As a result of listening to the needs of teens, this summer the YHC will be offering classes on nutrition and weight.

Resources 6:2 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

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Plain Talk

PHOTO: ELIZABETH RAPPAPORT

Summary

Key Lessons
Plain Talk Site Fact Sheets
Plain Talk Site Contact Information
References

Key Lessons

1. **Involve community residents.** Ask what they want, find out what they need, learn how to best *serve them*, and ask them to help you design, implement and evaluate the program.

2. Let the program be **driven by community residents and the process, not by the workplan.** Don't just focus on the number of people who came to workshops or other activities; notice the process. Find out what's happening in the lives of the people who are attending.

3. **Create realistic goals.** If you have a multi-component program, there is a danger of not being effective in any one area if you focus on all of them at the same time. Select one or two elements at a time – based on what is best for the community – and focus on them. Then, move on to other activities. You might want to even eliminate some components from your original work plan – remember, it is better to succeed in one or two areas than to fail in five. This is especially important for programs with only a few staff.

4. **Don't overwhelm your staff.** Make sure that the workload of your staff and volunteers is manageable. Several of the Plain Talk sites found it useful to encourage staff to create reasonable barriers between their work and their personal life. Staff were more productive when they found a healthy balance between themselves and their work. Also, rely on your lead agency to use the contacts it already has to build partnerships and involve other segments of the community in your effort.

5. **Don't be tied to one model.** Do your homework (community mapping, learn about other programs, etc.) and find ways to reach your goals that work for *your* community. Then, bring in other pieces to supplement your model. There is no such thing as one model that is the "right way" to do your program.

6. **Don't be disheartened** if people who have been involved with your project move on to other things. Attrition may actually be a sign of success – maybe members of the community moved to a better neighborhood, maybe they got a job and had less time to volunteer. Whatever the reason, new people bring in new ideas and give you a chance to reach more people with your message.

7. **Evaluate the effectiveness and process of your work.** Evaluation is not just for your donors, but for yourself (to keep track of what is happening and to know what you are accomplishing) and your community (see *Monitoring and Evaluation* component in Section 1).

8. **To ensure continuity of your program, integrate resource development into your on-going work.** If you don't have fundraising and development skills on staff, encourage your lead agency to focus on locating and ensuring resources for sustainability.

"[Plain Talk] has been a tremendous catalyst for the bonding of this community... for bringing about a sense of neighborhood, for bringing about pride in a community. It's creating parameters for the development of a village and an internal value system."

Cheryl Boykins, Coordinator
of Plain Talk Atlanta

PLAIN TALK ATLANTA

LEAD AGENCY:

Center for Black Women's Wellness
A community-based, self-help center dedicated to improving the mental, physical, spiritual and economic growth of Mechanicsville women and their families.

NEIGHBORHOOD:

Mechanicsville
A tract of land near downtown Atlanta that includes the McDaniel-Glenn public housing community.

APPROX. POPULATION (at project start-up):

3,000

ETHNICITY:

97 percent African American

KEY COMPONENTS:

Askable Adult Workshop Series – A series of eight evening sessions to help adults talk with youth, particularly about sex and sexuality.

Plain Talk Parties – Hosted by community members who participated in the Askable Adult series and were trained to be "party hosts," Plain Talk Parties provide a chance for neighbors to meet in small groups and discuss how to help teens make healthy choices. Parties are held in the hosts' homes.

Summer Youth Leadership Program – For eight weeks, from June to August, 30 youth aged 10–18 are offered jobs through this program. The program focuses on leadership development, reproductive health, goal setting and other life skills to help youth reach their full potential.

After-School Program – Offered January to May, the program provides information and training to youth aged 10–17 on peer pressure, goal setting, the risks of teen pregnancy, etc.

Dunbar Teen Center – A comprehensive health clinic located in the Center for Black Women's Wellness and run by Fulton County Health Department, the clinic serves youth aged 10–19 and is open Mondays and Wednesdays from 10:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Integrated and well-organized outreach strategy.
- Active and empowered community board.
- Multiple sectors of the community involved in project activities.
- Worked with the county health department to ensure health services for teens in Mechanicsville.

PLAIN TALK HARTFORD

LEAD AGENCY:

Hartford Action Plan on Infant Health
An infant mortality and teen pregnancy reduction project.

NEIGHBORHOOD:

Stowe Village
A public housing community of 650 units in the North End neighborhood of Hartford.

APPROX. POPULATION (at project start-up):

2,500

ETHNICITY:

51 percent Hispanic, primarily Puerto Ricans; 48 percent African American

KEY COMPONENTS:

Communication Skills Series – A series of 12, two-hour sessions to help adults talk with youth, particularly about sex and sexuality.

Health Concerns Group – Bi-weekly presentations and discussions on health issues identified by residents.

Teen Talk – Twice-monthly rap sessions for youth on topics identified by participants.

Male Forum – A city-wide forum that focuses on the role of men in teen pregnancy prevention.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Worked with the City Health Department and a city hospital to establish a weekly adolescent health clinic in the community.
- Developed and delivered multiple program components in English and Spanish for the people of Stowe Village.
- Worked with teens in a holistic way – addressing not only teen pregnancy and HIV/STD prevention, but also underlying issues such as self-esteem.
- Influenced *Breaking the Cycle*, Hartford's city-wide teen pregnancy prevention campaign to make Plain Talk/Hablando Claro principles prominent in the campaign. This resulted in increased commitment to create services for sexually active youth.
- Engaged health providers, health care funders and policy makers throughout the city in activities to create long-term financing commitments to improve and expand the provision of preventive health services for all Hartford adolescents. Activities address, in particular, the provision of reproductive health services and education as part of the provision of routine primary care.

PLAIN TALK NEW ORLEANS

LEAD AGENCY:	**St. Thomas Irish Channel Consortium (STICC)** A nonprofit community board that coordinates 12 organizations and social service agencies operating in the St. Thomas/Irish Channel neighborhood.
NEIGHBORHOOD:	**St. Thomas** The oldest public housing development in Louisiana, located near the Warehouse District of New Orleans.
APPROX. POPULATION (at project start-up):	2,717
ETHNICITY:	100 percent African American
KEY COMPONENTS:	**Walkers & Talkers** – An outreach strategy that includes training and ongoing supervision for volunteer outreach workers. **Home Health Parties** – Hosted by trained community members, Home Health Parties provide a chance for neighbors to meet in small groups and discuss how to help teens make healthy choices. Parties are held in the hosts' homes. **Black Men United For Change** – An active male engagement component that started as part of Plain Talk and went on to address a variety of issues facing men in St. Thomas. **Protection Pizza Parties** – Weekly youth gatherings that offer education and peer engagement training. **Community Celebrations** – Annual and special events for participating families as well as the entire community. **Healing Our Sexual Collective Workshops** – A series of eight evening sessions to help adults talk with youth, particularly about sex and sexuality.
MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS:	• Successful resident engagement that includes capacity building and training. • An organizing strategy that surpassed its goal of involving 100 families (at least one family per building). • Ongoing commitment to a community process that includes investing the time required to ensure that true communication is taking place.

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PLAIN TALK SAN DIEGO

LEAD AGENCY:	**Logan Heights Family Health Center** A major health care service provider in San Diego that targets low-income and medically underserved residents.
NEIGHBORHOOD:	**Logan Heights** (also known as Barrio Logan)
APPROX. POPULATION (at project start-up):	13,000
ETHNICITY:	85 percent Hispanic (primarily of Mexican descent)
KEY COMPONENTS:	**Vecino a Vecino** ("Neighbor-to-Neighbor") – A four-part, eight-hour training for adults, hosted in homes with six to eight participants. The training focuses on the knowledge and skills necessary for addressing sexuality. **Promotoras** – Trained peer educators who facilitate Vecino a Vecino sessions and do outreach and mobilizing for Hablando Claro. **Circulo de Hombres** – A male responsibility program involving male adults and adolescents working together to promote teen pregnancy prevention. This independent program was conceived through Plain Talk efforts. **Community Forums** – A part of a larger effort to reinforce the messages of Plain Talk. The forums are held in churches, schools and social service agencies. **Social Marketing Campaigns** – Communication and education campaigns that promote Plain Talk messages to adults who train to become *Askable Adults*. **Community Core Group** – A resident-led community advocacy group, made up of teens and adults, that plans, develops and implements Plain Talk program objectives. **Network of Health Care Service Providers** – A clinic-based health care service network that aims to expand, improve and make basic health services more accessible to the community.
MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS:	• Successful community engagement and leadership development components have encouraged people to communicate with teens about sexuality and related issues by becoming *Askable Adults*. • The Logan Heights Family Health Center has made a commitment to create a teen-friendly, accessible clinic that provides health care, education, peer counseling and outreach. • Plain Talk has become a culturally empowering program that responds to the history and realities of the people of Barrio Logan.

PLAIN TALK SEATTLE

LEAD AGENCY:

Neighborhood House
A community empowerment organization that offers childcare, social services, training and education to low-income residents of Seattle and King County.

NEIGHBORHOOD:

White Center
An unincorporated community between Seattle and Burien (a small city near the airport) that includes Park Lake Homes, a public housing complex.

APPROX. POPULATION (at project start-up):

2,200 (Park Lake Homes only)

ETHNICITY:

60 percent Southeast Asian; smaller percentages of Hispanic, African American and Caucasian

KEY COMPONENTS:

Plain Talk for Parents – A series of four, one-hour classes for parents of children grades 4–12. Classes focus on communication skills and ways to become advocates for teen health and sexuality issues in the community.

Training Institute – Workshops and consultations focusing on implementation of the Plain Talk for Parents series.

Community Organizing – Events supporting or advancing public policy initiatives that focus on teen health and related services.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Plain Talk rallied their supporters and volunteers and successfully advocated for placement of a school-linked health center (for youth) in the neighborhood.
- The unique and creative training materials and overall strategy for training adults to become community activists has generated extensive local and national interest.

Plain Talk Seattle reinforces the value of community for the residents of White Center.

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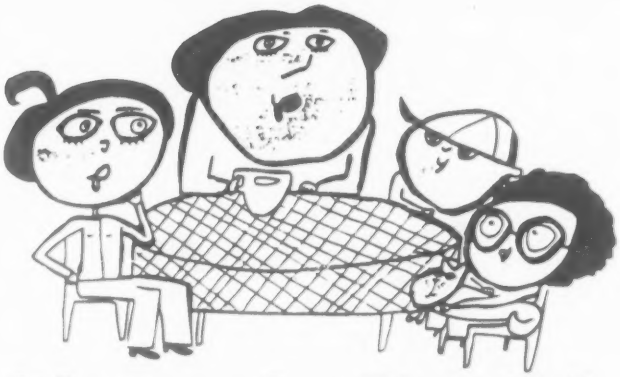

It's time for Plain Talk

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